Weekly Compilation of

Presidential Documents

Monday, March 15, 2004
Volume 40—Number 11
Pages 349–402

Contents

Addresses and Remarks

See also Meetings With Foreign Leaders
Global women's human rights, efforts to promote—395
National Association of Evangelicals convention, satellite remarks—377
New York
Bush-Cheney reception in East Meadow—388
Departure for Bay Shore—379
Discussion on the national economy in Bay Shore—379
Ohio, Women's Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century Forum in Cleveland—369
Radio address—351
Spain, March 11 terrorist attack on Madrid
Remarks—379
Wreath-laying ceremony for victims—393
Texas
Bush-Cheney luncheon in Dallas—355
Bush-Cheney reception in Houston—360
Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Houston—367
Virginia, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards in Arlington—367

Communications to Congress

Budget amendments for the Department of Defense, letter transmitting—349
Debt reduction authority, message transmitting report on implementation—367
Iran, message on continuation of national emergency—377
Morocco, message transmitting notice of intention to enter into a free trade agreement—366

Communications to Federal Agencies

Delegation of Certain Reporting Authority, memorandum—349

Interviews With the News Media

Interview of the President and the First Lady by Television of Spain (TVE)—393
News conference with President Fox of Mexico in Crawford, TX, March 6—352

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Mexico, President Fox—352

(Continued on the inside of the back cover.)

Editor's Note: The President was at Camp David, MD, on March 12, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is published pursuant to the authority contained in the Federal Register Act (49 Stat. 500, as amended; 44 U.S.C. Ch. 15), under regulations prescribed by the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, approved by the President (37 FR 23607; 1 CFR Part 10).

Distribution is made only by the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* will be furnished by mail to domestic subscribers for $80.00 per year ($137.00 for mailing first class) and to foreign subscribers for $93.75 per year, payable to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. The charge for a single copy is $3.00 ($3.75 for foreign mailing).

The *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* is also available on the Internet on the *GPO Access* service at http://www.gpo.gov/nara/nara003.html.

There are no restrictions on the republication of material appearing in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*.

Memorandum on Delegation of Certain Reporting Authority

March 5, 2004

Memorandum for the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Subject: Delegation of Certain Reporting Authority

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby delegate to you the functions conferred upon the President by section 206 of the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2476), to provide the specified report to the Congress. Nothing in this delegation shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect the authority of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget with respect to budget, administrative, and legislative proposals.

You are authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 9, 2004]

NOTE: This memorandum was published in the *Federal Register* on March 10. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for the Department of Defense

March 5, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed FY 2005 budget amendments for the Department of Defense reflecting the Army's recommendation not to proceed further with funding for the Comanche helicopter program. Overall, the discretionary budget authority proposed in the FY 2005 Budget would not be affected by these amendments.

The details of these proposals are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7760—Irish-American Heritage Month, 2004

March 5, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Millions of Americans trace their ancestry to Ireland's shores. During Irish-American Heritage Month, we recognize these proud citizens and their important contributions to America.

Irish Americans have helped settle the American frontier, build our cities, and defend our homeland. Through their service in government and the military, they have helped to uphold our democracy and advance liberty and peace around the world. Through their dedication to faith and family, they have strengthened our communities and enriched our Nation's character.

The names of Irish Americans who have helped make America great are familiar. Davy Crockett and Sam Houston helped settle the West. As Archbishop, John Cardinal O'Connor served the people of New York with conviction and compassion. President John Kennedy led America with steadfast determination during a time of great challenge.

These and millions of other Irish Americans have made America better and stronger.

This month, we celebrate the enormous gifts Irish Americans have given this Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2004 as Irish-American Heritage Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month by celebrating the contributions of Irish Americans to our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 9, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 6, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 10.

Proclamation 7761—Women's History Month, 2004

March 5, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During Women's History Month, we celebrate the many accomplishments of our Nation's women.

Women are leaders in American business, government, law, science, medicine, the arts, education, and many other fields. As mothers, sisters, and daughters, they bring compassion and integrity to our communities and help to teach our children the values that make our country great.

Women today are following in the footsteps of pioneers such as Sarah Pierce, Emma Willard, Catherine Beecher, and Mary Lyon, who helped open the doors to higher education for women in our country. Their vision and determination changed America forever. Women today also join a long tradition of defending our Nation. During the Revolutionary War, Margaret Cochran Corbin fought as a gunner and was severely wounded at the battle of Fort Washington. Today, more than 200,000 women are serving in our Nation's Armed Forces and working to defend America and advance peace and freedom. We are grateful for their sacrifice and for the military families that support them.

This month, we celebrate the many ways women strengthen and enrich America.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2004 as Women's History Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 9, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 6, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 10.

Proclamation 7762—Save Your Vision Week, 2004

March 5, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Millions of Americans enjoy healthy vision. Yet, each year, many of our citizens suffer from vision loss that could have been prevented or reversed with effective detection and appropriate intervention. Commemorating Save Your Vision Week reminds us of the importance of including eye care as part of a regular preventive health routine.

Eating healthy foods, wearing safety glasses, and avoiding the harmful effects of the sun's ultraviolet rays are ways to help to keep our eyes healthy. Regular, comprehensive

exams are also important to maintain good vision and eye health. For children, regular eye exams can help parents ensure that their children's vision is developing normally and can identify a problem before it becomes more serious. For adults, eye care professionals can detect glaucoma and eye damage from diabetes in the early stages of progression, thereby preventing further harm. Diabetes can seriously affect vision in addition to general health. An estimated 40 to 45 percent of all people diagnosed with diabetes will develop some degree of diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of new cases of blindness in working-age Americans that often presents few warning signs and no pain. Other eye diseases such as glaucoma may cause vision damage and eventual blindness without the individual being aware of a problem.

The Department of Health and Human Services is working to identify opportunities to improve the health of all Americans through Healthy People 2010, a national disease prevention plan. This plan includes the Healthy Vision 2010 Initiative, which is addressing many of the challenges posed by the loss or impairment of vision.

The Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963, as amended (77 Stat. 629; 36 U.S.C. 138), has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week in March of each year as "Save Your Vision Week." During this week, I encourage all Americans to learn more about ways to prevent eye problems for themselves and to help others maintain the precious gift of sight.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 7 through March 13, 2004, as Save Your Vision Week. I urge all Americans to participate by making eye care and eye safety an important part of their lives and to get regular eye examinations. I also encourage eye care professionals, teachers, the media, and all public and private organizations dedicated to preserving eyesight to join in activities that will raise awareness of the measures all citizens can take to protect vision.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 9, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 6, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 10.

The President's Radio Address

March 6, 2004

Good morning. This week terrorists launched a series of attacks in Iraq, targeting religious sites in Baghdad and Karbala during commemorations marking the Shi'a holy day of Ashoura. Laura and I and the American people were filled with grief and anger at these terrible acts of murder, which took the lives of dozens of innocent Iraqis.

Some of these killers behind these attacks are supporters of Saddam's former regime. Others are foreign terrorists. All of them are determined to halt and reverse all progress toward freedom in Iraq. One of the terrorist leaders, a killer named Zarqawi, recently wrote to a senior Al Qaida terrorist of his plan to tear Iraq apart with ethnic violence, to undermine Iraqi security forces, to demoralize our coalition, and to prevent the rise of a sovereign, democratic government. The killer's strategy will fail.

Immediately after the attacks, the world saw members of Iraq's Governing Council and other Iraqis quickly condemn the bombings and voice their determination that their country will be peaceful and free. The Iraqi people refuse to live in fear, and so do the members of our coalition. Fighting alongside the people of Iraq, we will defeat the terrorists who seek to plunge Iraq into chaos and violence, and we will stand with the people of Iraq for as long as necessary to build a stable, peaceful, and successful democracy.

The Iraqi people are making excellent progress. Members of the Governing Council are having a free and open and spirited debate as they complete a new framework for

governing their nation. This transitional administrative law will result in protecting the rights of all Iraqis and will move the country toward a democratic future.

A year ago, Iraq's only law was the whim of one brutal man. When the new law takes effect, Iraqis will, for the first time in decades, live under the clear protections of a written bill of rights. Under this law, all Iraqis will be treated equally. No religious or ethnic groups will be favored, and none will suffer discrimination at the hands of the state.

The law will protect the rights of free speech and peaceful assembly, the right to organize political parties, the right to vote in fair elections, and the right to worship according to one's own conscience. The law also will guarantee the right to a speedy, fair, and open trial. No Iraqi will ever again have to fear the midnight knock of the secret police.

The transitional administrative law will establish a clear path for the transition to full Iraqi sovereignty on June 30th of this year. Our coalition of 34 countries and the United Nations will continue to work closely with the Iraqi people as they progress toward this goal. The law calls for the election of a transitional national assembly by January 31, 2005. Later that year, this assembly will draft a new constitution to be ratified by the Iraqi people. And by the end of next year, the Iraqi people will elect a parliament and establish a Government that is fully representative and truly free.

Difficult work in creating a new Iraqi Government remains. Yet Iraqis are equal to the tasks before them. The Iraqi people have shown the world that they are fully capable of living in freedom.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:51 p.m. on March 4 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 5 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

The President's News Conference With President Vicente Fox of Mexico in Crawford, Texas

March 6, 2004

President Bush. *Hola. Que tal? Bienvenidos.*

President Fox. *Gracias.*

President Bush. Mr. President, Laura and I are pleased to welcome you and Marta to Crawford. I was honored as my first trip abroad as President to accept your invitation to your home in San Cristobal. We've met many times since. Today I'm pleased to host you here at our ranch.

Mexico and the United States are more than neighbors. We are partners in building a safer, more democratic, and more prosperous hemisphere. In this age of terror, the security of our borders is more important than ever, and the cooperation between Mexico and American border and law enforcement is stronger than ever.

Through the Border Partnership Agreement, our two nations are improving the infrastructure at ports of entry along our common border. We're using technology to allow law-abiding travelers to cross the border quickly and easily, while officials concentrate on stopping possible threats. Our Mexican and American officials are working together to arrest dangerous criminals, including drug smugglers and those who traffic in human beings. President Fox and I are determined to protect the safety of American people and the Mexican people.

President Fox and I are continuing our efforts to support democracy in the region. I support the President's help in bringing order and stability to Haiti. As our efforts move forward, I welcome Mexico's further support.

Our two nations will continue to cochair the Bolivia Support Group to protect the institutions of democracy in that country. We will work with the Organization of American States to help ensure the integrity of the Presidential recall and referendum process underway in Venezuela.

I am committed to working with President Fox to expand free and fair trade between our nations. We've seen trade lift both our nations and both our economies. Over the

past decade, trade between the United States and Mexico has nearly tripled to about $230 billion. Today, Mexico is America's second-largest trading partner, and we are Mexico's largest.

We will continue to work together and with Canada to enhance our common prosperity. Selling American goods and services in foreign markets is vital to the American economy. Selling our products abroad creates jobs for America. We must reject economic isolationism. There is no future in walling America off from the rest of the world. American workers and families, no less than the people of Mexico and the people of all nations, benefit from free and fair trade.

We will work to ensure a system of safe and orderly migration. Earlier this year, I proposed a temporary-worker program, not an amnesty program, that will offer legal status as temporary workers to undocumented men and women who were employed in the United States when I announced this proposal.

Under this program, America will also welcome workers from foreign countries who have been offered jobs by American employers that no American has filled. I oppose amnesty, placing undocumented workers on the automatic path to citizenship. This program will match willing workers with willing employers without disadvantaging those who have followed the law and waited in line to achieve American citizenship.

This new temporary-worker program will strengthen both the American and Mexican economies. The United States will benefit from the labor of hard-working immigrants. Mexico will benefit as productive citizens are able to return home with money to invest and spend in their Nation's economy.

This system will be more humane to workers, who will be protected by labor laws and able to establish their identities. It will live up to the highest ideals of free nations.

Mr. President, thank you for the excellent dialog we had today. Thank you for the leadership you provide for our neighbor and friend. And thank you for being a friend to Laura and me. *Bienvenidos.*

President Fox. Good morning. I would like to thank the President and his wife, Mrs. Laura Bush, for inviting us here to spend some time with them here at the ranch at Crawford, some time for friendship and some time for hard work.

We have a long tradition of relationships and meetings with Presidents Bush and Fox, starting with the meeting in the ranch at San Cristobal, where we developed a work agenda. We spoke—both Presidents continue to review, looking forward to what lies ahead.

We know the value of the open relationship, commercial relationship, and the impact that it has had on both these nations and the unprecedented levels of prosperity that it brings to our people. It's a two-way street, a two-way commercial street. It's a buying and selling operation.

I would like to point out that Mexico buys from U.S., the United States, in volumes that equal the volumes of Germany, Spain, Italy, and France. All of this creates employment. And that's why we continue to revise the commercial agenda, and we can see that things are going well in this direction.

Immigration is a subject that is of shared responsibility between both our nations. But we have a shared definition about immigration. We have to work together to develop a legal system that is orderly and safe and respects the dignity of those involved. It is clear to us that the people who come to this country make a significant contribution to the American economy. And I underline the fact that I refer to those who are working to contribute to the economy.

And that is why we welcome President Bush's proposal that he made in January. And that is why, in our meetings, we worked to advance this proposal, and that's what we have been doing today. We welcome the news that was confirmed today with regard to visitors to the U.S. from Mexico. We recognize the value to those who come to the United States to work, to study, to contribute. And we appreciate what this will do to the flow of visitors now that they will not have to be photographed or fingerprinted at the frontier for short visits to the United States. We appreciate what that will do the flow of people coming to this country.

The other good news this year is the—about the NAFTA visa for professionals, that

allows professionals to come and work in either country and contribute to both.

We also appreciate the recent visit of Secretary Ridge, talking about the cooperation in security between our countries. And we understand that this is progressing well and we have a solid and good basis to move forward, always respecting the security issues that are essential to both countries. We have spoken about competition and productivity and jobs. In order to allow the initiative of the United States, together with Canada, this will allow us to protect jobs in the region, and through the North American Initiative, contribute to the economies and to the workforce on both sides of the border.

In the fields of energy and industrial products, food products, sanitation systems, and systems for the protection of food products, the contributing opportunities for businesses, these are all subjects which are moving forward well. And we look forward to agreements with Canada in the near future that will contribute to the North American Initiative, which will benefit the three nations in this region.

Then in the area of the international relations, specifically in the Caribbean, we have been revising our joint efforts in that area. And we will continue to work in the areas of Haiti and Venezuela, Bolivia, and others in the region to promote democracy and human development and sustainable economic systems.

Thank you.

President Bush. How many questions, Scott? Two questions? *Dos preguntas por cado lado.*

Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

National Economy

Q. Thank you, sir. Senator Kerry has been hitting you pretty hard on job growth. And yesterday's report gave his arguments a little bit more traction. Can you tell the American people why they shouldn't listen to his arguments and vote for you?

President Bush. The economy is getting stronger. We've overcome a lot. We've been through a recession. We've been through an attack. We've been through corporate scandals. We've been through war, and yet our economy is getting stronger. And the question is, who brings forth the best pro-growth policies. You've heard us talk about the advantages of trade. This Nation must reject economic isolationism. We need less regulation. We need tort reform. We need to make sure the tax cuts are permanent. Raising taxes will make it harder for people to find work. We've got a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small business agenda that is making this economy stronger.

Do you want to translate that? Okay. You don't have to. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, a translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Make sure you tell them: Don't raise taxes. [*Laughter*]

[*A translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Like some others want to do.

[*A translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Okay, thank you. [*Laughter*]

[*President Fox spoke in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. Blame it on me. [*Laughter*]

[*A question was asked in Spanish, and no translation was provided.*]

President Bush. *Si, si.* I understand. *Comprendo.*

First of all, President Fox has made it very clear that democracy and transparency and rule of law are integral values of Mexico. And where there is corruption, there will be law and justice, no matter who is responsible. And that is a commitment of this President and it's a commitment I share, because in our own country we've had corporate scandals. And what's important in both countries is to deal with these issues through rule of law and to hold people to account when they're guilty of betraying the trust.

Who do you want, Scott? Okay, how are you?

Q. Hi.

President Bush. Welcome. *Pelo roja.* [*Laughter*]

September 11

Q. Mr. President, some firefighters and families of the 9/11 victims—of the 9/11 victims want you to pull your campaign ad focusing on the tragedy. Are you prepared to honor their wishes?

President Bush. First of all, I will continue to speak about the effects of 9/11 on our country and my Presidency. I will continue to mourn the loss of life on that day, but I'll never forget the lessons. The terrorists declared war on us on that day, and I will continue to pursue this war. I have an obligation to those who died. I have an obligation to those who were heroic in their attempts to rescue, and I won't forget that obligation.

How this administration handled that day as well as the war on terror is worthy of discussion. And I look forward to discussing that with the American people. And I look forward to the debate about who best to lead this country in the war on terror.

Por fin.

Immigration Policy

[*A question was asked in Spanish.*]

President Bush. *Vamos a ver. Vamos a ver.* Go ahead, want to translate? To make sure I got all of it.

Interpreter. The question is on the immigration policy. The Government of Mexico wanted to know what the date certain would be for this new program or what proposals you have for temporary immigrants, and how do you believe it will affect the upcoming election process?

President Bush. Well, we just—the President just discussed the border crossing cards, the issue of the border crossing cards, and he discussed the professional visas. And so we're making progress.

I put forth what I think is a very reasonable proposal and a humane proposal, one that is not amnesty but in fact recognizes that there are good, honorable, hard-working people here doing jobs Americans won't do. And I certainly hope the Congress takes this issue up. But there's no telling what's going to happen in an election year, so it's very difficult to give a date. The date that matters to me is the date in which I laid out what I think is a reasonable plan, which was in January.

Mr. President, thank you.

President Fox. *Gracias.*

President Bush. Thank you all. Enjoy the rest of your day.

Attorney General Ashcroft

Q. Any word on John Ashcroft?

President Bush. I talked to him last night.

Q. How is he?

President Bush. He sounded groggy but optimistic that they'd get the pancreas settled down.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan. President Fox spoke in Spanish and some reporters asked their questions in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Dallas, Texas

March 8, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I told Louis I like a short introduction. [*Laughter*] He didn't let me down. I'm glad you all are here. Nothing like spending the weekend in Texas, and there's nothing better than being with a bunch of friends. I'm so pleased that you all came. Thanks for being here. If you can't count on your home State in politics, you're in deep trouble.

Texas is going to be the cornerstone of the victory that Dick Cheney and I are going to achieve in November of 2004. And I appreciate so very much your loyal friendship. It just means a lot to Laura and me. Speaking about Laura, she is in New Orleans. She's eating lunch at Galatoire's, and you're stuck with me. [*Laughter*] But she's doing great. She's a fabulous First Lady.

And Dick Cheney is a great Vice President. I'm proud to have him standing by my side. I oftentimes say Dick Cheney is the country's greatest Vice President ever. Mother says, "Wait a second." [*Laughter*]

I appreciate my friend Louis Beecherl. He's been a longtime friend, and you can count on Louis. And Louis, I want to thank

you for being the Dallas regional finance chair.

I'm honored to be on the stage with a man who's doing a fabulous job as the Governor of the great State of Texas, Rick Perry.

Texas is blessed to have two really good, fantastic United States Senators in Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn. I'm proud to call them friends. Thank you all for coming.

I want to thank Fred Meyer and Jeanne Johnson Phillips and Roger Williams and all the regional chairs and all the people who worked hard to fill up this hall. Thank you for your hard work. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the national chairman for Bush-Cheney '04. He's doing a really good job.

I want to thank the Members of the United States Congress who are here, starting with Ralph Hall. Ralph, I'm for you in tomorrow's primary. I wish you all the very best. Thank you. Glad you're here.

Chairman Joe Barton is with us. Joe, thanks for coming. I'm proud you're here. Appreciate you coming. Sam Johnson is with us today. Sam, thanks for coming. Good to see Shirley. I appreciate Pete Sessions. I'm glad you're here, Pete. Pete has got a big race. I'm pulling for him. Got to make sure you turn out to vote for this good Congressman.

I appreciate Michael Burgess being here as well. Michael, thank you for coming. Finally, a man who is making a mark as a good freshman Congressman, Jeb Hensarling. I appreciate you coming, Jeb.

I saw my friend Agricultural Commissioner Susan Combs. Thank you for being here. I know Victor Carrillo is with us today, railroad commissioner. Good to see you, Victor. Michael Williams is with us. Mike, good to see you. One time I was Michael's campaign chairman in the Republican primary in Midland County and helped him come in third. [*Laughter*] He got rid of me as his campaign chairman, and now he's doing big things statewide in the State of Texas. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank very much the speaker of the house who is with us today, Tommy Craddick, from Midland. Where are you, Tommy? Thanks for coming. You're doing a fine job. All the members of the house and senate who are here, local officials.

But most importantly, I want to thank the grassroots activists. I want to thank you for what you're fixing to do, which is man those phones, put up the signs, and turn out a huge vote. We're counting on you.

Finally, it's good to see my friend Jack Graham, who is with us, the pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church. I want to thank Jack for delivering the invocation. I want to thank you all for your prayers. It means a lot to Laura and me. It's a fantastic gift to give to anybody in public office, and for that, we're really grateful.

Last Tuesday, I placed a call to Senator Kerry. I congratulated him on his victory, and I told him I was looking forward to a spirited campaign. It's going to be an interesting debate on the issues. My opponent spent two decades in Congress. He spent a long time in Washington, and he's built up quite a record. Senator Kerry has been in Washington so long that he's taken both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly has strong beliefs. They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

The voters have a very clear choice in this election between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people, a clear choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger.

I look forward to setting the alternative squarely before the American people. I look forward to this campaign. I look forward to make my case to the great people of this land. We've achieved great things in the past 3 years. Most important, we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom throughout our world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion at home. I will leave no doubt

where we stand, and we will win on the 2d of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline and an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursue the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. We came to Washington to get some things done for the people. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to get prescription drugs and choices to our seniors. We chose to lead, and we have delivered results for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. The President needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Soon he'll learn, anger is not an agenda for America. I will confront the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and Dick Cheney and I stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

Because we acted, our economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. He wants to take them away. He would use that money to expand the size and the reach of the Federal Government. I've got a better idea: To keep the economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing so people can find work. We need to maintain fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from the frivolous and junk lawsuits that make it expensive to do business. We need to help control the cost of health care by association health care plans, health savings accounts, and this Congress must pass national medical liability reform. We need to open up markets for Texas farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize our electricity

system and to make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My opponent talks about job creation, but he is against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda.

This economy of ours is going through a time of challenge and change. We're helping people to gain the skills and security to make a good living, to look forward to a good retirement. All skills start with education. That's why I worked so hard with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. This good law is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the standards. We're demanding accountability in every public school in America. We expect every child in this country to learn to read and write and add and subtract so not one single child gets left behind.

There's more to do. I look forward to working with Congress. We must help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We've got plans to help our community colleges train workers for the industries that are creating most new jobs. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and this administration clearly understands that gate must be open to all Americans.

We're working toward an ownership society in this administration in which more people own their own homes and build their own savings. That's what we want. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people to own and manage their health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their retirement under Social Security. When people have solid assets, they gain independence and security and more control over their future. I believe in private property so much, I want everyone in America to have some.

On issue after issue, there is a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts, against putting patients in charge of Medicare, against tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority, more choices, and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give you the orders, and you will pay the bills. I've got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make—I had a choice to make—either to take the word of a madman or take action to defend our country. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat, he just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs

are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising in the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more safe and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. A collection of killers is trying to shake our will. They don't understand America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society, which will make the world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. I'm for all—I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners we have in Iraq right now. America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Just days ago my opponent indicated he's not comfortable using the word "war" to describe the struggle we're in. He said, "I don't want to use that terminology." He also said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. And after the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

One very important part of this war is intelligence gathering, as Senator Kerry noted. Yet in 1995, 2 years after the attack on the World Trade Center, my opponent introduced a bill to cut the overall intelligence budget by $1½ billion. His bill was so deeply irresponsible that he didn't have a single cosponsor in the United States Senate. Once again, Senator Kerry is trying to have it both ways. He's for good intelligence, yet he was willing to gut the intelligence services. And that is no way to lead a nation in a time of war.

Our intelligence professionals are taking great risks and doing a great job. And so are the men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen the great decency and their unselfish courage. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives. They deserve the respect of our Government. We stand for fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination of people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, reforms which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of

any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, exploited, or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of this country from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility culture, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high, when the challenges are difficult, when the choices are clear, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One man pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know, for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. at the Fairmont Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Louis A. Beecherl, Jr., Dallas regional finance chairman, Jeanne Johnson Phillips, Texas State finance vice chairman, J. Roger Williams, north Texas regional finance chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; Fred Meyer, chairman, Republican National Committee Presidential Victory Team; Shirley L. Johnson, wife of Representative Sam Johnson of Texas; Susan Combs, commissioner, Texas Department of Agriculture; Victor G. Carrillo, chairman, and Michael L. Williams, commissioner, Railroad Commission of Texas; Tom Craddick, speaker, Texas House of Representatives; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Houston, Texas

March 8, 2004

Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated—[*laughter*]—unless you don't have a seat. Thanks for a great Houston welcome. I'm so glad to be back home. Nothing like a weekend in Texas to kind of refresh the soul. By the way, if you see 41, tell him I was asking about him—[*laughter*]—or Mother, over there at the Rice Epicurean. [*Laughter*] I do want to thank you all for being so kind to Mother and Dad. They love Houston. They love the citizens of Houston. They're proud to call this place home, just like I'm proud to call Texas home.

I'm feeling pretty good about my chances in Texas. [*Laughter*] But I'm not going to take anything for granted. With your help,

Texas is going to be the cornerstone for a national victory in November of this year. Vice President Cheney and I are looking forward to working here in Texas to get as many votes as we can get. If you think about the Vice President, I picked the right man. Dick Cheney is doing a great job. I like to tell people, Vice President Cheney is the greatest Vice President the country has ever had. One time Mother said, "Wait a minute." [*Laughter*]

I married the greatest First Lady the country has ever had—Mother included. [*Laughter*] Laura sends her love. I'm really proud of her. She is steady and strong, decent and compassionate. I'm lucky she said, "Yes," when I said, "Will you marry me?"

I'm proud to be here with Rich Kinder and Nancy. I want to thank them for their loyal friendship. He said, four years ago he introduced me. He's been introducing me for years and years and years, and I'm grateful for that.

I'm proud to be here with the great Governor of the State of Texas, Rick Perry. He's doing a fine job for the people of Texas, all the people of Texas.

We're blessed to have a great congressional delegation in Washington. I take great comfort in knowing that Kay Bailey Hutchison represents the State of Texas. She's a leader on the Senate floor. If you need to get anything done in the Senate, you give Kay Bailey a holler. [*Laughter*] I'm also proud that John Cornyn is representing our State so well in the United States Senate.

Tom DeLay can deliver the vote. We've had a great record of accomplishment, working together. But make no mistake about it, this guy can deliver the vote in the House of Representatives, and the country is better off for it.

Joe Barton is with us tonight. I want to thank Joe for coming. He's a Congressman from up north—that is, north of Texas. [*Laughter*] Kevin Brady is with us. Congressman Brady, thank you for coming. Congressman Culberson is here from the great city of Houston. I'm honored you're here, John. Congressman Neugebauer from Lubbock is with us today too. Randy, thank you for coming. You're probably wondering why the Congressman from Lubbock came all the way over to Houston to hear me speak. He heard Air Force One is flying back to Washington after the speech. [*Laughter*] I think you'll like the accommodations. [*Laughter*]

I'm proud of my friend Fred Meyer for being the State finance chairman for the State of Texas. Thank you, Fred, and Jeanne Johnson Phillips. My friend Mercer Reynolds, the national finance chairman—he's from Cincinnati, Ohio. We let him come into Texas anyway. [*Laughter*] And he's doing a great job. I'm proud of Mercer and proud of you all, for all of you have worked hard, particularly this cast of characters sitting on the stage. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being good friends and for helping us prepare for what's going to be a good, strong campaign.

I finally got an opponent. [*Laughter*] And I called him last Tuesday to congratulate him, and I told him I'm looking forward to a spirited campaign. It's going to be an interesting debate on the issues. He spent two decades in Washington, and he's built up quite a record. Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, for NAFTA, for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. My opponent clearly has strong beliefs. They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

The voters have a very clear choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. They have a clear choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to putting these alternatives squarely before the American people. I look forward to this campaign.

We've achieved great things the last 3 years, and I look forward to telling the American people that. But most importantly, we have a positive vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and for extending peace and freedom throughout our world, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity and compassion here at home. We'll leave no

doubt where we stand, and come November, we'll be reelected for 4 more years.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with the stock market in decline, and our economy was heading into recession. But we acted. We delivered historic tax relief for the American people, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it very clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to office, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated. We gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can doubt the strength and the skill and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. We came to the Nation's Capital to get some things done for the people. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to give prescription drugs and choices to seniors. We chose to lead, and we have delivered for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents or future generations. A President must stand up, make tough decisions, and keep his commitments. And that is how I will continue to lead our great Nation. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far all we hear from the other side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. I'll take on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination. Dick Cheney and I will make it clear to this country, we are ready to lead our Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the biggest—with the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government could have.

Because we acted, the economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is at its highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added more than 350,000 new jobs over the last 6 months. The tax relief is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. [*Laughter*] He wants to take them away. He will use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea: To keep this economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing. We need fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits. We need to control needless regulation. We need to help control the cost of health care by association health care plans, by health savings accounts. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level. This country ought to be opening up markets, new markets, for our farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize

our electricity system and make this country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My opponent talks about job creation, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, small business-owner economic agenda.

This economy is changing, and people need skills. All skills start with education, so I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. It's a good law. We're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar for every single child. We've demanded accountability in our public school system. We expect the schools to teach our children how to read and write and add and subtract, so not one single child is left behind in this country.

We have a plan to help our high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We've got an aggressive plan to help our community colleges to train the workers for the industries, the new jobs being created for the 21st century. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and this administration understands the gate must be open to all Americans.

We're also working hard to make sure America promotes ownership. We promoted an ownership society in this administration. We want more people to own their own homes. We want people to own their own savings. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people to own and manage their health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their retirement under the Social Security system. We understand that when people have assets of their own, they gain independence and security and dignity and more control over their future. I believe in private property so much, I want every American to have some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts. He's against putting patients in charge of Medicare. He's against the tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give the orders, and you pay the bills. [*Laughter*] I got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance; the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator now sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our Government, of our country. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, he chose defiance. And so I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman or take action to defend America. Faced with that choice, I will defend our country every time.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove him from power. [*Laughter*] Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the next Iraqi election. [*Laughter*] We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam Hussein's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted,

Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. You see, they know that a free Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause for terror. That's what they know, and they're right. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. They don't really understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs or assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society, which will make the whole world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world but only if other countries don't object. [*Laughter*] I'm for united action, and so are 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. America must never outsource America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Just the other day, my opponent indicated that he's not comfortable using the word "war" to describe the struggle we're in. He said, "I don't want to use that terminology." He also said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I strongly disagree. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

One very important part of this war is intelligence gathering, as Senator Kerry says. Yet in 1995, 2 years after the first attack on the World Trade Center, my opponent introduced a bill to cut the overall intelligence budget by $1.5 billion. His bill was so deeply irresponsible that he didn't have a single cosponsor in the United States Senate. [*Laughter*] Once again, Senator Kerry is trying to have it both ways. He's for good intelligence, yet he was willing to gut the intelligence services. And that is no way to lead our Nation in a time of war.

Our intelligence professionals are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. And so are the men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and the world, I have had the privilege—the high privilege—of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and unselfish courage, and I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We are strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups from all faiths, so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which each person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a new culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility culture, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of the leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period where the stakes are high, the challenges are difficult, the choices are clear, a time when resolve is needed. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began.

On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I'll never forget that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." I remember a guy pointing at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this country. Not long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges or our ability to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We'll need all these qualitites for the work ahead. We have a war to win. And the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Hilton Americas. In his remarks, he referred to Rich and Nancy Kinder, fundraisers, Jeanne Johnson Phillips, Texas State finance vice chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Gov. Rick Perry of Texas; Fred Meyer, chairman, Republican National Committee Presidential Victory Team; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on the Completion of the Transitional Administrative Law in Iraq

March 8, 2004

I congratulate the Iraqi Governing Council and the Iraqi people on completing the Transitional Administrative Law for Iraq. This document is an important step toward the establishment of a sovereign government on June 30. It lays the foundation for democratic elections and for a new constitution, which will be written by an elected Iraqi assembly and approved by the Iraqi people.

This law provides a framework for continued cooperation among Iraq, members of the international Coalition, and the United Nations as the Iraqi people make progress towards democracy. And it provides the essential freedoms and rights to all Iraqis regardless of gender, religion, or ethnic origin—

including freedom of religion, freedom of speech and assembly, the right to a fair trial, and the right to choose their own representatives.

The adoption of this law marks a historic milestone in the Iraqi people's long journey from tyranny and violence to liberty and peace. While difficult work remains to establish democracy in Iraq, today's signing is a critical step in that direction.

Statement on International Women's Day

March 8, 2004

Today, in observance of International Women's Day, the United States reaffirms the principle that freedom is the right of every woman and man and the future of every nation. The United States continues to work to advance and support the dignity of all people, regardless of gender, race, religion, or ethnic origin.

The best guarantor of the rights of women is freedom and democracy. Free societies allow for free elections, free markets, free press, and free labor unions. They guarantee religious liberty, protect property rights, and educate their people. They protect their freedoms with the consistent and impartial rule of law.

Over the past 2 years, the advent of democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan has freed millions of people from brutal tyranny. We celebrate that they are now assuming the basic human rights too long denied them. Much remains to be done to consolidate and protect these new rights, but the United States and our international partners are determined to continue this progress.

On this day, women like Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest for her efforts to bring democracy to Burma, and Shirin Ebadi, who has spent a lifetime championing human rights, receive recognition. The United States pledges to promote democracy and human rights around the globe and to help those who struggle to see the same light of liberty now dawning on the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.

NOTE: The statement referred to Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma; and 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi.

Notice—Notice of Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With Morocco

March 8, 2004

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002, I have notified the Congress of my intention to enter into a free trade agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco.

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of that Act, this notice shall be published in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 8, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., March 9, 2004]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on March 10.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Notice of Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With Morocco

March 8, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–210; the "Trade Act"), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intent to enter into a free trade agreement (FTA) with the Kingdom of Morocco.

This agreement will create new opportunities for America's workers, farmers, businesses, and consumers by eliminating barriers in trade with Morocco. Morocco is one of the United States strongest friends in the Middle East. Increased trade will benefit Americans and help strengthen a tolerant, open, and more prosperous Morocco. Entering into an FTA with Morocco will not only strengthen our bilateral ties with this important ally, it will also advance my goal of a Middle East free trade area (MEFTA) within a decade.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of signing the United States-Morocco FTA. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress in developing appropriate legislation to approve and implement this free trade agreement.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 8, 2004.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report on Implementation of the Debt Reduction Authority

March 8, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1321 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107–228), I transmit herewith a report prepared by my Administration on implementation of the debt reduction authority conferred by title XIII, subtitle B of Public Law 107–228.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 8, 2004.

Remarks at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Houston

March 8, 2004

It's really good to be here. I thought there's a lot of bull in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] But I'm really glad to be here at the livestock show. It's—somebody said, "What's it like when you come here?" It's like being in a place with people who are willing to stand up to values that are important in this country.

So it's great to be here. I want to congratulate the winners, congratulate the—congratulate the young who are here who are working outdoors with the animals and practicing important—important values that will take them through the rest of their life.

I worked the ropeline, worked the fenceline coming out. I can't tell you how many people said, "Mr. President, we're praying for you in Iraq." On behalf of a grateful world, I want to thank you for that very much. And I want to thank you for your hospitality. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. at Reliant Arena. The Office of the Press Secretary released the transcript of these remarks on March 9. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Presentation of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards in Arlington, Virginia

March 9, 2004

Congratulations. Good job. Thank you all. Go ahead and be seated. Thank you all very much. Welcome. I'm really glad to be invited back to this annual event to recognize excellence and to bestow an honor named for a great American.

This year, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award goes to seven outstanding recipients. Each set ambitious goals. Each organization worked hard to achieve them. You're setting such a good example as a beacon of excellence. You represent the great strength and the entrepreneurial spirit of the American economy. I congratulate you for a job well done.

And I appreciate Secretaries Evans and Paige for joining me here. I thank them for their service to our country. I thank Dr. John White, the University of Arkansas chancellor. I appreciate the fact that he didn't bring up the Arkansas-Texas football score. [*Laughter*] I thank Letitia Baldrige for being here, Mac's favorite sister—only sister? Yes. [*Laughter*] I want to thank those of you involved with the Baldrige Awards. I want to thank you for keeping the spirit alive. I want to thank you for focusing on quality; thank the judges and the foundation members.

I appreciate the Members of Congress who are here today. I'm glad you all have taken time to come to honor the recipients. I want to thank the U.S. Army Band for providing quality music.

Malcolm Baldrige served as the Commerce Secretary in the eighties, at a time when many questioned whether America

could remain the world's strongest economy. He was an optimistic guy. He dedicated himself to proving the skeptics wrong. That kind of confidence in America's economic strength was justified in his day, and it is justified in our day.

Think about what this economy has been through the last several years. In 2000, the stock market began a steady decline. By early 2001, the Nation was in a recession. Then we got attacked on September the 11th. We had to face the consequences of that attack. We saw scandals in corporate boardrooms in which the trust of workers and investors was violated. We took action to face all these challenges. Today, our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger.

Think about the economic environment of 2003. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing is up. Homeownership is at an alltime high. Stock prices are up. The stock market wealth has risen by more than $3 trillion since the beginning of 2003. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, in the 1980s, and the 1990s. Thanks to our productive workers and the entrepreneurial spirit of this country, the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world is the United States of America.

As our economy moves forward and new jobs are added, some are questioning whether American companies and American workers are up to the challenge of foreign competition. There are economic isolationists in our country who believe we should separate ourselves from the rest of the world by raising up barriers and closing off markets. They're wrong. If we are to continue growing this economy and creating new jobs, America must remain confident and strong about our ability to trade in the world. Given a level playing field, America will outperform the competition, and America will continue to be a world leader.

We've got great advantages here in this country. We've got the world's hardest working people. We've got the most productive workforce in the world. We have an attractive climate for our businesses to expand. We have innovative, dynamic companies which are producing world-class products and services. America's best companies are emphasizing quality and service and developing world-class methods for production. By selling good ideas and good products in markets not only here but across the world, we're creating jobs, good, high-paying jobs for the American citizens.

Each recipient of today's award earned it. When I say we need to be confident about our future, I'm confident because I just heard the stories of great success. They got their best ideas from all kinds of places, whether it be from their workers or their customers. They listened.

In the health care category, we have two winners: Baptist Hospitals in Pensacola, Florida—I was wondering whether if we called it Pentecostal Hospitals, we'd be—[*laughter*]—Saint Luke's Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri. These hospitals have focused on serving patients and their families better. That's what they focused on. They got their employees fully involved in measuring performance. Because of their excellence, both of these winners are saving lives. It must make you feel good to work in an industry in which you save somebody's life.

In manufacturing, we have Medrad Incorporated, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A maker of medical imaging devices, Medrad's commitment to excellence runs from the top, from the CEO, John Friel, who, by the way, said we—I put my knee under one of his devices. [*Laughter*] I said, "I appreciate the diagnosis. You just hadn't figured out the cure for old age." [*Laughter*]

I'll tell you what I like about John's style. He spends a day each month on a frontline job. Here's a fellow who is the CEO who mops the floors, who's taken phone calls, who's heard customer complaints, who works on the assembly line. He's built a culture where everyone at the company has a voice in the way things are done.

Caterpillar Financial Services of Nashville, Tennessee, as well as Boeing Aerospace Support of St. Louis, provides maintenance and other services. These are good companies. Both companies have set up teams of employees to focus on quality. And as a result, both have a lot more happy customers.

In the case of Boeing Aerospace Support, one of their happy customers happens to be

the Nation's Armed Forces. And if the Nation's Armed Forces are happy, I'm happy. [*Laughter*]

I love the fact that we're honoring the smallest business ever to win the Baldrige Award, Stoner, Incorporated. Today is vacation day. [*Laughter*] The whole company is here. [*Laughter*] This company, which is in Quarryville, Pennsylvania, makes specialized cleaners, lubricants, and coatings. They have an interesting goal, an easy goal to understand—I like clear speakers—[*laughter*]—never lose a customer. And that focus has translated to company-wide quality.

And then we've got educational excellence. It's an amazing story you just heard. The Community Consolidated School District 15, Palatine, Illinois, faces challenges common to many of the school districts across America, but it achieves uncommon results. These people don't make excuses for failure, see? They do what I call "challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations." They expect the best. They believe every child can learn.

It's easy to say, "We can't achieve excellence because one-third of our students come from low-income homes." It's easy to say, "We can't achieve excellence because English is not the primary language in the homes of another third of our students." Yet, because of rigorous testing and evaluation and a commitment to high standards, the belief that every child can learn, 84 percent of the second graders read at or above grade level. It's a fantastic accomplishment. The teachers are great in that school. I'm told that from the classroom to the cafeteria, every employee is committed to a single goal: No child should be left behind.

I appreciate the example this school district has set. I appreciate the example all the companies here have set as well. You're now what we call quality experts, which means you're going to get calls from other companies or organizations to find out how you won, what you did to achieve such good success, and I hope you share your knowledge. The country is better off when you're willing to share how you achieved excellence with those who will want to accomplish the same goals.

Anyone looking for an easy answer, though, is going to be disappointed. It may sound easy in the speeches. It's hard to win this award. [*Laughter*] This isn't one of these deals where everybody gets a blue ribbon. [*Laughter*] You have to work hard. You have to be totally focused and committed to excellence. It has to be a part of your culture, your very being.

A good product, of course, is essential. It's hard to be successful if you don't make something somebody doesn't want to buy. You've got to have a good business plan. But the most important ingredient is a great workforce, people who live and work by the principles of excellence and fairness and team work and personal responsibility.

That's really what we're honoring today, isn't it—great workforces, people who are willing to strive for something greater than themselves. The Baldrige Award winners are showing one of the greatest strengths of this Nation and our economy. Whether the challenge comes from a competitor across town or from a competitor across the ocean, American workers are up to the job. Just listening to these speeches here confirms what I know: This country can meet any challenge.

I want to congratulate the award winners, congratulate the companies. May God bless you and your families. May God continue to bless this great Nation. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige's sister, Letitia Baldrige.

Remarks to the Women's Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century Forum in Cleveland, Ohio

March 10, 2004

Thanks for the warm welcome. I appreciate so very much the invitation to come today. I'm really glad to be back in the great city of Cleveland, Ohio. It's good to be in a room full of accomplished women. As the husband of Laura—[*laughter*]—and the son of Barbara, I feel right at home.

I enjoy being in the company of entrepreneurs, risktakers, dreamers, and doers. You all share a lot of common experiences. You've met challenges of starting a business,

and that's hard. It required more time than you had in a day, more money than you kept in your bank, and more energy than you thought you had. But you chose an interesting life. You chose to lead. You chose to follow your dreams. And I appreciate your spirit. You're making the country a better place by working as hard as you do.

As the Governor said, nearly half of all small businesses are owned by women. That's powerful. That's a beautiful statement. Firms owned by women are being started at more than twice the national rate. The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well.

This is a land of great wealth, and it's a land of great opportunity, and you're seizing the opportunity. Through the hard work of our people, the innovation of our businesses, and the good policies now in place, we have put a recession behind us. Thanks in large part to your hard work, our economy is expanding. Productivity is strong. Unemployment has been falling. Incomes are rising, and we're going to stay on this path of growth and prosperity in this country.

This economy has challenges, and we know how to meet them. We'll continue making the finest products and selling those products, not only here at home but across the world. We'll make sure that American workers have the education and the skills to succeed in the jobs of the future. And we'll remain the leading economy in the world, because America will remain the best place to do business in the world.

I want to thank Jennette Bradley, the Lieutenant Governor, for her hospitality. And I want to thank the other officials from the State of Ohio who are with us.

I appreciate Elaine Chao, a member of my Cabinet, for joining us today. Elaine is doing a great job for the United States. *Es un placer* to be here with Hector Barreto, the head of the SBA.

I traveled today with Steve LaTourette, the Congressman from this area. Steve, I'm honored you're here. He's a progrowth guy. [*Laughter*] He knows the role of Government is not to try to create wealth but to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can flourish. I appreciate you being here. He's a great Congressman from this part of the world.

I appreciate the sponsors. Thanks for putting up with me and the entourage. [*Laughter*] Most of all, thank you for being here.

Today when I landed at the airport, I met Judi Firestone. Some of you may know Judi. She's owned her own computer business since 1986. She's an entrepreneur. She's a visionary. She works hard. As well she is the northeast Ohio chairman for the Race For The Cure, Komen Foundation Race For The Cure. She is a breast cancer survivor.

The reason I bring her up is, the true strength of America is the hearts and souls of our citizens. The true strength of this country is the fact there are people like Judi Firestone who are willing to volunteer their time to make the community in which she lives a better place. It's really the strength, isn't it? I mean, the truth of the matter is we can change this country one heart and one soul at a time when citizens like Judi take time out of her life, her busy life, to help somebody who hurts.

And so the reason I herald Judi Firestone is to really talk about the strength of the country. I know many of you here heard the call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. I want to thank you for what you do to make your community a loving place. I want to thank you for what you do to heal the souls that hurt. I want to thank you for what you do to be a part of the incredibly important fabric of America, that it saves lives not because of government but because people are volunteering their time. And if you're not volunteering, please do so. The country needs you. But Judi, thanks for coming.

This economy of ours has faced challenges over the last 3 years. Think back about what we have been through. Not long before I took office in January of 2001, I invited business leaders from around our country to come to Austin. They told me that factories and workers were seeing the first signs of recession. That's what they said. They said that the economy was troubled, that things weren't feeling too good, and they were right. In fact, the manufacturing sector had started losing jobs in August of 2000. By January of 2001, orders for equipment and software were falling, the stock market had been declining for several months.

And as we started to come out of the recession, and the economy, because of the entrepreneurial spirit and the fact that we got great workers, started to recover, the enemy hit us on September the 11th, 2001. It was a day of terrible loss, deep mourning. It was also a serious blow to our economy. The attacks closed the New York Stock Exchange for nearly a week. Remember back to what it was like after September the 11th. U.S. airspace was entirely closed for the first time. In the 3 months after September the 11th, the economy lost nearly one million jobs.

The enemy hurt us. But we're plenty tough and determined as a nation. And as a result of the American people's resolution and determination, we began to recover. And then we learned about fraud and wrongdoing in corporate America. And that hurt our economy as well. There were scandals that were in the—years in making, shook the energy industry. It affected the telecommunications industry. It hurt the accounting profession and other key sectors of our economy. A lot of innocent workers and investors lost their jobs and their savings.

Those scandals hurt. But we acted, and we passed the strongest corporate reforms since Franklin Roosevelt held the office that I'm honored to hold. Federal prosecutors are holding corporate executives to account. We have made it clear, we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

This economy of ours had been through recession, had been through emergency, had been through corporate scandals, and then I made the necessary decision to deal with Saddam Hussein. September the 11th taught a lesson I will never forget and our country must never forget. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. That's the lesson of that fateful day.

In Iraq, this administration looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat to the American people. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And then the United Nations Security Council, in 2002, gave Saddam Hussein a final chance to comply with U.N. resolutions and disarm. We all saw a threat, and we put out, through resolutions, the demand that he disclose and disarm. And once again, he chose defiance. He made the choice. I had a choice as well: Either to trust the word of a madman or to defend the American people. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

And therefore, in 2002 and early 2003, the television screens across America had banners saying, "March to War," and as business leaders, you understand that's not very conducive to investing capital. Marching to war is not a positive thought, but we overcame that challenge. Thanks to hard-working people and leaders, entrepreneurs, we overcame that challenge, and now we're marching to peace.

This week, the Iraqi Governing Council approved the new fundamental law, which will be the basis for a free constitutional democracy in the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, because we did the right thing, the world is becoming more peaceful, and America is more secure.

My point is this: We faced challenge after challenge during the past 3 years, and we're overcoming them all. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. Homeownership is at an alltime high. The unemployment rate today is lower than the average rate in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Thanks to our productive workers, thanks to business leaders such as yourself, the United States of America is the fastest growing major industrialized economy in the world.

One of the main reasons the recession was one of the shortest in modern history is because we acted. The tax relief I signed left money in the pockets of families and job creators at just the right time. We cut the taxes on our families. We lowered tax rates on everybody who paid taxes. We didn't play the old political game of winners and losers in the Tax Code. We increased the child credit, and we reduced the marriage penalty. This helped to lift after-tax incomes in America by 8.4 percent since 2001, and the spending and investing of Americans is driving this economy forward. That's what's happening.

Most of the new jobs in America are created by small businesses. I understand that. And so that is why we focused a lot of our tax relief on small businesses. The majority

of small businesses are either sole proprietorships or Subchapter S corporations, which means many of you pay business taxes at the individual rates. And so, therefore, when you lower rates on individuals, you lower rates on small businesses. You allow small-business owners to keep more of their own money to invest and, therefore, create more jobs.

As well to encourage investment, we increased the annual deduction for equipment purchases by small businesses from $25,000 to $100,000. You see, I understand you can't have a healthy economy without a healthy small-business sector, and the tax relief we passed is reinvigorating small businesses all across this country.

We did something else that will help the entrepreneurial spirit in this country. We're phasing out the death tax. Small-business owners and ranchers and farmers shouldn't have their assets taxed twice. The death tax is unfair. You ought to be able to pass your assets on to whoever you want.

Progrowth policies are working. They're helping this economy—the economic recovery to turn into lasting prosperity. That's what I want, and that's what's happening. Yet, the jobs report last week shows that, while the economy is dynamic and growing, it's experiencing some fundamental change. Productivity has grown faster over the last 2 years than at any time in more than 50 years, in part because technology is changing the way we do things. You know what I'm talking about. You're more productive in your companies.

In some fields, one person can do the work that used to be done by many. That's what being more productive means. At one semiconductor plant in New Mexico, new technology is allowing the same number of workers to produce 20 times as many computer chips as they used to.

Higher productivity is a good thing. It's good for our workers. It is good for our economy. If you're more productive, you're better able to compete and survive and expand and grow. People think—when they think about productivity, you think of it this way: Operating heavy equipment every day is hard work, but operating a shovel every day is harder work. I don't think many people here want to trade in your laptop for one of those old hunt-and-peck typewriters. [*Laughter*]

Advances in productivity lead to higher wages. That is a fact. The more productive a worker becomes, the better wages that person will receive. A more productive society means lower prices for consumers. A more productive society is one that generates greater national wealth. And small businesses are leading the way in this productivity revolution, and for that, I'm grateful.

Higher productivity also presents us a challenge, and here's the challenge: Many companies fill new orders and expand operations without needing to hire new workers. Because we're a productive workforce, the economy can expand, and in some cases, they don't need to add additional workers to meet that expansion, to meet the additional demand. Manufacturing output, for instance, increased sixfold between 1950 and 2000—a sixfold increase. Yet because of high productivity, all this manufacturing is done by about the same number of workers. And because of the new technologies throughout the economy, another challenge is the fact that we've got to make sure people have got the skills necessary to become productive workers.

In Ohio, you know firsthand the effects of economic change. Manufacturers are more productive, so they aren't creating as many jobs as they used to. Ohio's unemployment rate is higher than the national average. Manufacturing communities like Youngstown and Cleveland have been hit especially hard. I understand that. I know there are workers here concerned about their jobs going overseas. I share that concern. I know they're wondering whether they'll ever be able to find new skills necessary to fill the new jobs of the 21st century. I understand that. There are those with good jobs who worry about their health care and their retirement benefits. There are a lot of moms and dads who wonder whether or not their child will be able to find a job in the community in which they were raised. There are legitimate concerns amongst people here in Ohio and elsewhere around the country.

And one reason why there's concern is because, as the economists say, "This is a time of transition. It's a time of change." And if

you're one going through transition, it's not an easy experience. But then we have a responsibility to help. We have a responsibility to help with more than just unemployment insurance. We have a responsibility in Government to create an environment that increases more jobs and helps people find the skills to fill those jobs. That's a responsibility that we must do in Government.

Some politicians in Washington see this new challenge, and yet they want to respond in old ways. Their agenda is to increase Federal taxes, to build a wall around this country, and to isolate America from the rest of the world. They never get around to explaining how higher taxes would help create a single job in America, except maybe at the IRS. They don't explain how closing off markets abroad would help the millions of Americans who produce goods for export or work for foreign companies right here in the United States.

That old policy of tax and spend is the enemy of job creation. The old policy of economic isolationism is a recipe for economic disaster. America has moved beyond that tired, defeatist mindset, and we're not going back. There's a better way, and that's what I want to talk about today. To expand the creation of new jobs and to see our workers through our transition, Government must meet basic responsibilities.

First, instead of building barriers to trade, we must break down those barriers so that good products, American products, are welcomed and sold on every continent. Look at it this way: America has got 5 percent of the world's population. That means 95 percent of potential customers are in other countries. We cannot expect to sell our goods and services and create jobs if America and our partners, trading partners, start raising barriers and closing off markets.

Millions of American jobs are supported by exports. That's a fact. One in five factory jobs in this country directly depends on trade. The surest way to threaten those jobs is a policy of economic isolation. The surest way to add more jobs is a confident policy, a confident economic policy that trades with the world.

The economic isolationists have a pessimistic outlook. They don't show much faith in the American worker or the American entrepreneur. They don't think we can compete. But here in Ohio, you're proving them wrong. People all over the world are buying products from Ohio, cars and tires and batteries and jet engines and ball bearings and electronics and crops from your farms. Since 1996, under NAFTA, Ohio's exports to Mexico have tripled and last year came to more than $2 billion. Two billion dollars of exports means it's more likely somebody will have a job in the State of Ohio. Since the end of 2000, Ohio's exports have increased more than any State in the country. And why is that? Because this State has got great entrepreneurs who are making high-quality products that the world wants to buy. And another reason why is because you've got great workers, who, if given a level playing field, can out-produce any worker, anywhere on the Earth.

Foreign companies recognize the quality of American workers, and that is one of the reasons why so many have chosen to locate plants in our country. More than 900 foreign facilities employ people here in the State of Ohio, including major companies like Honda. Ten percent of Honda's international workforce lives in this State. About 16,000 Ohioans work for Honda, with good, high-paying jobs. That's a lot of your fellow citizens employed by a company that has chosen to do business in America. And that's not counting the people who work at 165 different Ohio companies that supply Honda with parts and material.

When politicians in Washington attack trade for political reasons, they don't mention these workers or the 6.4 million other Americans who draw their paychecks from foreign companies. Economic isolationism would lead to retaliation from abroad and put many of those jobs at risk. Those who play on fear and criticize trade are not serving the interests of our workers. Across America, from Marysville, Ohio, to Seattle, Washington, workers are better off—better off—because this country is an optimistic, successful trading nation.

My administration is committed to creating the jobs that trade brings. It's a commitment of my administration. Remember this: Presidents of both parties since World War

II have made the decision to open up our markets for the good of American workers and for the good of American consumers. If we're opening up our markets, it makes sense to get others to open up theirs, and so we're dedicated to making sure that other nations treat us fairly. That's why I pressed for free trade agreements with Singapore and Chile. We want them to open up their markets to America's goods and services. We've recently completed negotiations with Morocco and Central America.

I just completed a negotiation with Australia. I want you to understand this important aspect of the trade agreement. Almost all manufacturing exports to that country will be duty-free immediately. That means this could help America's manufacturers sell another $2 billion worth of goods to Australia every year. If we're going to let people sell here, we ought to be encouraging them to let—open up their markets as well. That's good for jobs, and it's good for America.

I want the world to "Buy America." The best products are those—listen, the best product on any shelf anywhere in the world says, "Made in the USA."

To create more jobs, Government must meet a second basic responsibility. If we want to continue to outperform the world, if we want to be able to compete, America must remain the best place in the world to do business. If we want to be competitive with other places, we've got to be a good place for people to invest capital. We've got to make sure that people who invest capital are not penalized by lousy Government policy. Tax cuts were vital to creating the environment for growth and innovation, and there are more steps that need to be done.

There needs to be fewer regulations on businessowners in America. I bet you spend a lot of time filling out paperwork. [*Laughter*] I bet not much of your paperwork is ever read. [*Laughter*] The Government needs to let you focus on your business, on developing goods and services. It needs to let you focus on hiring people, rather than spending hours filling out paperwork. In order for us to keep jobs here at home and expand the job base, we need better regulatory policy at the Federal, State, and local level.

In order to make sure that we're able to create jobs here at home and to prevent jobs from going overseas, this country must have tort reform. Frivolous lawsuits or the threat of a frivolous lawsuit create an environment that is not conducive to job creation and job expansion. There's a role at the Federal level for tort reform. The trial lawyers are tough up there, though. [*Laughter*] Members of the Senate need to hear from you. The House has passed good tort legislation, but the Senate has got to hear from you. Tort reform will help make it easier to keep jobs here at home.

We need to do something about the high cost of health care as well. I'm a strong proponent of association health plans to allow small businesses to pool risk so you can better afford health care plans for your employees. We've introduced a new concept called health savings accounts, which will make a big difference for small-business owners and employees as well. And the market has taken hold. We ought to—listen, frivolous lawsuits are running up the cost of health care in America. Frivolous lawsuits against docs and hospitals are making it harder for you to be able to afford health care. We need medical liability reform at the Federal level now.

We're interested in making sure our jobs don't go overseas and that there's jobs available for citizens all across our country. We need affordable and reliable supplies of energy. Here in Ohio, you know what I'm talking about. [*Laughter*] You've experienced the disruption and high cost when factories and cities lose power. It's time for our Nation to modernize the electricity systems. We need to promote clean coal technology so we've got abundant supplies of energy. We need to explore for more natural gas. We need to promote conservation. There's a lot of things we need to do. One thing is for certain: In order to expand our job base, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Finally, to make sure this economy grows, to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, we must have certainty in the Tax Code. It's important for elected officials to understand that if you're a business leader, if you're the CEO of a corporation, and you're uncertain about your taxes from year

to year, because of—because the tax policy is haphazard, it's hard for you to plan. It's hard for you to think ahead. It's hard for you to be confident in your investment strategy.

Part of the issues we face here in the future of this country is the fact that the tax relief we passed is going to expire. The marriage penalty will go back up. By the way, it doesn't make any sense to have a marriage penalty in the Tax Code when you're trying to encourage marriage in the country. The child credit will go back down if Congress doesn't act. The death tax will eventually come back to life. Imagine what it's going to be like in 2011, when it's supposed to come back to life. There's going to be a lot of people maybe trying to die a little earlier to avoid the—[*laughter*]—it's unbelievable, when you think about it. Think about public policy that says: Your taxes are going to be down this year but not. We may have increased expensing allowances or not. Uncertainty in the Tax Code makes it hard for the job base to continue to expand. For the sake of job creation, Congress needs to make the tax cuts permanent.

The third basic responsibility is to make sure American workers are prepared for successful careers in the new economy. Some sectors are producing fewer jobs, but in other areas, jobs are growing. They're multiplying. There's a lot of opportunity in a changing economy. Here in Ohio, there's a shortage of nurses and pharmacists and other skilled professionals. And so any viable economic strategy, progrowth strategy, must be to help people find new skills, to gain new skills, to be able to fill the new jobs of the 21st century. If you're in a period of transition, you must help people make that transition.

All skills start with education. I'm a strong proponent of the legislation we passed in Washington called the No Child Left Behind Act. This is a good piece of legislation which is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar. See, we believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract. That's what we believe. And therefore, we expect every child to achieve those skills. And therefore, we're expecting, in return for Federal money, the school districts to measure, because if you don't measure, how do you know. We've just got to stop this practice of shuffling kids through the school as if they don't matter. What matters is every child gets a basic education. And if you can't read, you're not going to be able to take advantage of the new jobs of the 21st century. And that's why we're focused on secondary schools, and that's why we've got plans to help high school students who've fallen behind in reading and math to gain the skills necessary to be able to work in this new economy.

We've got programs to help workers who've been displaced by the effects of trade by giving them assistance in job training and health care and relocation. I proposed what's called personal reemployment accounts for people who need extra help so they can pay for child care and transportation and other costs of finding work. In other words, we're trying to help people.

But we've got a plan as well. It's an important plan that's going to make a big difference, and that is to help the community colleges train workers for jobs which actually exist. Community colleges need to listen to the business community and the community in which they live. They need to ask the question, what do we need to do to train workers? What are you looking for? What kind of skill set is necessary for you to hire this person? They need to be flexible. The curriculums must be willing to change. The community college system has got a fantastic opportunity to make sure workers gain the skills necessary to become employable in this changing economy.

I was in Toledo recently and talked with a guy named Mike Potter. He lost a manufacturing job. He went back to the community college to get retrained. He got help. The Government paid. And he got retrained, and he found a new job because he was willing to go back to school, and the community college listened to the employers in the community in which he lived.

I was in Northern Virginia and went to a community college system. I met Connie Mitchell. She heard there was jobs available in the health industry. And by the way, there's a lot of jobs being created in the health industry. And so she went to the community college, and they gave her the skills

necessary to become a nurse. And now she's employed.

In Mesa, Arizona, I met a Stacey Leedom, who's a single mom—which, by the way, is the hardest job in America, being a single mom. She was a graphic artist. She had worked for a company, I think, for 12 or 13 years. She got help to go back to Mesa Community College. She learned a new skill in the computer industry. And in her first year of a new job, she made more than she did after 12 years as a graphic artist.

You see, if you become a more productive citizen, you'll make more money. Better productivity, better skills means higher pay. And our country must focus our education system on helping workers learn the new skills of the 21st century so we can increase the job base of this country.

You know, it wasn't all that long ago that some people said that America was not up to global competition. I don't know if you remember back in the seventies and eighties—that's what we heard, though, wasn't it—that we couldn't compete with the Japanese, that they were too good at being automobile makers, that foreign companies would soon overtake our own, that we just weren't up to it. That's what a lot of people said in that period. We were told that American companies weren't flexible enough, American workers were not disciplined enough, and American products weren't good enough.

Well, the pessimists were wrong. American companies remade themselves to beat the competition. Great ideas for improvement came from our workforce, workers who are on the line. And the leaders of those companies listened. The entrepreneurial spirit was strong in America, and it was the American entrepreneur that invented new technologies, technologies that have made this country the most productive in the world. Our economy performed like never before, and today, no one doubts what nation's economy leads this world.

Our Nation in 2004 is vibrant. As opposed to retreating like the pessimists thought, we're selling computer chips to Japan. We're producing BMWs in Greer, South Carolina, for export to Germany. We're even exporting California wine to France.

There are people who doubt our ability to compete. There are economic isolationists who surrender and wall us off. It's bad for the country, bad for consumers. It's bad for workers. We'll prove the pessimists wrong again. We'll continue to open up untapped markets for American workers and businesses. We'll keep this Government on the side of growth and job creation, so American businesses can compete and prosper. We'll focus on job training and education, so Americans can improve their skills and improve their lives. We'll get the policies right, and the American people will do the rest. You will show, once again, that this Nation has the energy and the confidence and the creativity to meet every challenge.

I want to thank you for your leadership. I want to thank you for your spirit. I want to thank you for working hard to realize the American Dream and own your own business. I want to thank you for employing people. I want to thank you for the faith of your country.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. at the Cleveland Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Jennette Bradley of Ohio; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

March 10, 2004

On March 15, 1995, by Executive Order 12957, the President declared a national emergency with respect to Iran pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706) to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Iran, including its support for international terrorism, efforts to undermine the Middle East peace process, and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. On May 6, 1995, the President issued Executive Order 12959 imposing

more comprehensive sanctions to further respond to this threat, and on August 19, 1997, the President issued Executive Order 13059 consolidating and clarifying the previous orders.

Because the actions and policies of the Government of Iran continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States, the national emergency declared on March 15, 1995, must continue in effect beyond March 15, 2004. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to Iran. Because the emergency declared by Executive Order 12957 constitutes an emergency separate from that declared on November 14, 1979, by Executive Order 12170, this renewal is distinct from the emergency renewal of November 2003. This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 10, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:37 a.m., March 11, 2004]

NOTE: This notice was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 11, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 12.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran

March 10, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the Iran emergency is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2004, to the *Federal Register* for publication. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on March 14, 2003 (68 Fed. Reg. 12563).

The crisis between the United States and Iran constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Iran, including its support for international terrorism, efforts to undermine Middle East peace, and acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them, that led to the declaration of a national emergency on March 15, 1995, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and maintain in force comprehensive sanctions against Iran to respond to this threat.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 10, 2004.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 11.

Satellite Remarks to the National Association of Evangelicals Convention

March 11, 2004

Good morning, Ted. I want to thank you for your kind introduction. Thank you all very much. Thank you all. Ted, I think I need to invite you to Crawford so you can drive my pickup truck and learn the joys of that truck.

I want to thank you for the invitation. It's such a pleasure to speak to all of you in Colorado Springs. The National Association of Evangelicals was founded 62 years ago with the highest of calling, to proclaim the kingdom of God. Today, your organization includes 51 denominations representing some 30 million people. You're doing God's work with conviction and kindness, and on behalf of our country, I thank you.

America is a nation with a mission. We're called to fight terrorism around the world, and we're waging that fight. As freedom's home and freedom's defender, we are called to expand the realm of human liberty. And by our actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 50 million people have been liberated from tyranny, and they are reclaiming their dignity as free people. Our Nation can take great pride in these achievements. Yet I know that liberty is not America's gift to the world. Liberty and freedom are God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

I'm fortunate enough to be President during a time in which our country holds great influence in the world, and I feel that we must use that influence for great purpose. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we must not turn away. And that is why, on the continent of Africa, we're bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of people now suffering with AIDS. From Southeast Asia, to Eastern Europe, we're working to end the modern-day slavery of sex trafficking. And throughout the Middle East, we're standing with the men and women who work and sacrifice for freedom.

Here at home, we're pursuing an agenda to help more citizens realize the promise of this country. That's why we've passed major tax relief to help our Nation's families and to create new jobs for American workers. We've passed education reform that gives parents more choices and makes sure every single child has the opportunity to learn.

My administration is firmly committed to rallying the armies of compassion in America to help our fellow citizens in need. All of you know the power of faith to transform lives. You're answering the call to love and to serve your neighbor. Our laws should welcome and encourage your good works. We should never discriminate against faith-based charities.

My administration is also committed to defending the most basic institutions and values of this country. We're working to build a culture of life. We took an important step last November when I signed a law to end the brutal practice of partial-birth abortion. We will vigorously defend this law against any attempt to overturn it in the courts. I will also continue to support crisis pregnancy centers and adoption and parental notification laws. I proposed doubling Federal funding for abstinence programs in schools and community-based programs.

In the past 2 years, I have been proud to sign the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act and legislation supporting maternity group homes. I strongly support the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act," and call upon the United States Congress to send it to my desk. I oppose the use of Federal funds for the destruction of human embryos for stem cell research. I will work with Congress to pass a comprehensive and effective ban on human cloning. Human life is a creation of God, not a commodity to be exploited by man.

I will defend the sanctity of marriage against activist courts and local officials who want to redefine marriage. The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in cultures and by every religious faith. Ages of experience have taught humanity that the commitment of a husband and wife to love and to serve one another promotes the welfare of children and the stability of society. And Government, by recognizing and protecting marriage, serves the interests of all. It is for that reason I support a constitutional amendment to protect marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

It is my responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I've met that duty. I've nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law and not legislate from the bench. Yet some Members of the United States Senate are using unprecedented tactics to block up-or-down votes. Every nominee deserves a fair hearing and a timely vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some Members of the Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

All of us are living in historic times. We've been called to meet serious challenges. I have great confidence in America because I know the strength of our people. The world saw that strength on a September morning exactly 30 months ago and in the countless

acts of courage and kindness that have followed. Together, Americans are moving forward with confidence and faith. We do not know God's plan, but we know His ways are right and just. And we pray He will always watch over this great country of ours.

I want to thank you for the chance to speak to this distinguished convention. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 10:42 a.m. from the Map Room at the White House to the convention meeting in Colorado Springs, CO. In his remarks, he referred to Ted Haggard, president, National Association of Evangelicals.

Remarks on Departure for Bay Shore, New York

March 11, 2004

Terrorist Attack in Spain

Today I spoke to His Majesty the King of Spain—Jose Maria Aznar as well—about our country's deepest sympathies toward those who lost their life as a result of terrorist bombings in Spain. I told him we weep with the families. We stand strongly with the people of Spain. I appreciate so very much the Spanish Government's fight against terror, their resolute stand against terrorist organizations like the ETA. The United States stands with them. Today we ask God's blessings on those who suffer in the great country of Spain.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to King Juan Carlos I and President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain; and Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA).

Remarks in a Discussion on the National Economy in Bay Shore, New York

March 11, 2004

The President. Thanks for having me.

Vincent Trapani. Any time, any time. You can make the call; we're here.

The President. I've been looking for some auto parts.

Mr. Trapani. I can hook you up real easy.

The President. That's good, yes.

Mr. Trapani. I know a guy. [*Laughter*]

The President. You know a guy? Here's what we're—we're here to talk about how the economy works and how people can find work. We've got some challenges to face. And Vince, I want to thank you for giving me the chance to come and visit with people involved in this community. We've got some entrepreneurs, and we've got some hard workers, and we've got some educators and people helping people get education. And that's what we're going to talk about.

First, I want to thank you, Vince, and your family for greeting me. Nothing like being in the presence of an entrepreneur, somebody who dreams big dreams, works hard, and ends up employing good, hard-working people to provide a product somebody wants to buy.

Mr. Trapani. That's the American Dream.

The President. That is the American Dream. I said, "Did you buy this company?" He said, "No, I started it on a shoestring." And it's one of the most fantastic aspects about our society, and frankly, it's the entrepreneurial spirit that we're heralding today that is enabling us to overcome a lot of obstacles.

Before I talk about the obstacles, I do want to say thanks to my friend Governor George Pataki, the great Governor of this State. He's a great buddy of mine, and he and Libby are great friends of Laura and me as well. And he's doing a good job. He's a solid, solid, smart, capable public servant.

I also flew down on the airplane today with two fine Members of the United States Congress—Peter King, from this part of the world. Peter, thank you for coming. If he looks different, he just had some cataract surgery so he doesn't wear his glasses anymore. I said, "You're looking more beautiful than ever, Congressman." [*Laughter*] And I appreciate my friend Vito Fossella is with us today. Where are you, Vito? Glad you're here. These are two strong leaders. They care deeply about the citizens of the communities which they represent. They were talking New York the entire way from Washington, DC,

to here, and I appreciate calling them friends.

I'm also proud that Jim Garner, the mayor of Hempstead—thank you for coming, big Jim. Jim, he's the president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. That's a big deal. And I want to thank you for working with the administration on urban policy.

I appreciate very much all the local and State officials who are here. I know there's a lot of members of the statehouse and the senate and the local governments. I appreciate you coming out to say hello. It's an honor that you would show up and say hi to the President.

I'm also very proud of the fact that John DiGiano is here. Where are you, John? He's a buddy of mine. There you are. Hi, John. Is Mama with you—is your wife with you? There she is, oh, yes. John is just a good buddy. I had to say hello to him. He's a friend. He's one of the great Americans, and he's the dad of a great American family. And I'm proud you came, John. Thank you all for being here.

Today at the airport, I met Rich McKeon. You probably never heard of Rich. Rich is a volunteer. He's a mentor. He's involved with Operation Hope, teaches youngsters about the—financial math, about how the economy works. He's been a member of Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The reason I bring up Rich is because a lot of times we talk about the strength of our country. One of the strengths, of course, is our military, and by the way, I'm going to keep it strong. Another strength is the fact that we've got—that we're a wealthy nation compared to others, and we intend to keep it that way. But the true strength is the hearts and souls of our citizens. That's really the strength of America.

The strength of this country—you know, we can change the country one heart at a time when somebody takes time out of their lives to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. And that happens. That happens in every neighborhood in America. It happens whether Government says, "Do it," or not. People follow their heart because they hear a higher calling.

Here's old Rich. He's working to make a living, and yet he's taking time out of his life to surround a child with love and to give a child a little extra knowledge. Where are you, Rich? Thank you for coming. I appreciate your service.

My call is if you want to serve your country like Rich is, find a way to help somebody in need. Many of you probably are, and if you are, thanks a lot from the bottom of this Nation's collective heart.

Listen, we've overcome a lot. See, I'm sitting here next to Vince, and he's optimistic about the future. He just told me he was. And I don't think you were faking——

Mr. Trapani. There's no question about that.

The President. See——

Mr. Trapani. We live in a great country.

The President. Well, that too. And—but I want you to remember what we've been through, just to keep this conversation in perspective, about why we should be optimistic about what this—the future of this country.

First of all, we went through a recession. That means things were going backwards. The stock market started to decline—that affects people who had savings—in March of 2000. And then we had negative growth. And during negative growth, people who work for a living begin to wonder whether or not there's going to be a job. That's what that means. There's uncertainty. Business leaders and planners wonder whether or not the markets are going to be available for them to sell a product.

And we started to recover, and then the enemy hit us. And you know what it meant to have the enemy hit us, particularly in neighborhoods like these. John knows what it meant to have the enemy hit us. It was a devastating blow. It was a blow to our psychology. It was a blow to our economy.

By the way, this Nation rallied. It rallied, in large part, thanks to the citizens of the great State of New York, because they refused to be intimidated by terrorists and killers. It rallied because of the courage of the firefighters and police officers that people all around the country got to know via their television set. That's—it rallied. We're a strong nation.

And yet, that attack hurt us. It hurt us economically. They say over a million jobs were

lost because of that attack. And then we started to recover, because we're a strong nation full of strong people. And then we found out some of the corporate citizens of America forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. In other words, they didn't tell the truth. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders. They didn't tell the truth to their employees. But we passed tough laws. And by the way, that hurt the economy. If you can't have trust in the business leaders of an economy, the economy will suffer. It hurt. And so we passed tough laws. And so we're running them—these people are being held to account, let me put it to you that way. Justice is being delivered. We will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

And then I made a tough but necessary decision. The lesson of September 11th is this: We must deal with threats before they fully materialize. If you think there's a threat, you must deal with it early, before it is too late. That's the lesson of September the 11th. It's a lesson people must never forget.

I looked at the intelligence in Iraq and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence; they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council, right up the road there, looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. And so I went to the U.N. and said, "Look, let's deal with the man. He needs to reveal, disclose, and destroy weapons programs. That's what he needs to do." The world spoke, not just the United States of America. We spoke. He chose defiance. I had a choice to make at that point in time: Either trust the word of somebody who had deceived the world and had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people, or defend America. And given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

The march to war hurt the economy. Laura reminded me a while ago that—she said, "Remember what was on the TV screens"—she calls me George W.—"George W." I call her First Lady. No, anyway—[*laughter*]. She said, "We said 'March to War' on our TV screens." It's hard to run a business if you're marching to war. It's not conducive to capital investment. Marching to war is a negative thought, and if you're in the business world and you're trying to hire people or you're looking for work, it's not a conducive time to do so. Now we're marching to peace. We took the tough decision, but now we're marching to peace. We've overcome a lot, and our economy is growing.

We've got robust growth in the last half of 2003. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. Manufacturing activity is up. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Unemployment rate is at 5.6 percent. There's still more to do; don't get me wrong. There's still people looking for work. There's still people worried about the job they now hold. And I'm going to talk a little bit about that before we get to some of our participants.

But let me remind you why I think we were able to overcome all we did. One, the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in America, and we intend to keep it that way. Two, the workers of America are the best in the world, the most productive, best, hardest working people on the face of the Earth. And three, we cut the taxes. If a family has more money to spend, it means they're going to demand an additional good or a service. And when they do, somebody is going to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces it, somebody is going to work. That's what that means. When somebody goes and buys a car because of the extra money they've got in their pocket, they just might be buying a part for that car right from this shop right here. At least Vince wants them to.

Mr. Trapani. That's okay by me.

The President. And if they buy a part for the car manufactured here, it means that this workforce is more stable. That's what that means. Tax relief worked.

And you hear a lot of talk in Washington about tax relief and taxing the rich and all that business. Let me tell you something. First, good policy says you cut the taxes on everybody who pays taxes, not try to pick and choose. Secondly, we increased the child credit to $1,000 per child to help families, and you're going to hear about some families who have been helped by this. The other thing we did is we reduced the marriage penalty. I mean, it doesn't seem to make much sense to penalize marriage when you're trying to encourage marriage in our society, yet the Tax Code did. And we made that better.

But you know what else we did—and this is important for people to understand when you hear this talk about the Tax Code. When you cut the taxes on individuals, you really reduce the taxes on small businesses as well, because most small businesses are sole proprietorships and Subchapter S corporations. And you see, when you cut the taxes on a small business, it gives that small-business owner more money to invest. And when that person invests, it means somebody is more likely to keep a job. Make no mistake about this: That tax cut was good for the small businesses of the United States of America, and that's one of the reasons why this economy is so strong.

A couple of other things, if you don't mind.

Mr. Trapani. Any time. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you, sir.

I told you there's more work to do. Let me tell you some of the things that we need to do. These tax cuts expire, which means taxes are going up on people. That's what that means. When you hear, "We're going to repeal the tax cuts," that's Washington, DC, code for "I'm fixing to raise your taxes." That's what that means. It doesn't make any sense to raise taxes on people who are beginning to employ people. If you're a small business, we shouldn't be raising the taxes on the small-business owners. We shouldn't be raising taxes on the hard-working families. It makes no sense to take money out of the pockets of the people that are driving this economy forward, and so we need to make the tax cuts permanent. Congress needs to listen to the voices of the people.

There's too many junk lawsuits in our society. We need tort reform in order for people to be—expand their businesses. You hear talk about outsourcing; I'm as concerned about outsourcing as the next person. But the way to deal with outsourcing is to make America a better place to do business, not a worse place. Raising taxes will make it harder to create jobs. Lawsuits make it harder to create jobs. We need an energy policy so people can plan their businesses around a solid supply of energy. We need to be less dependent on foreign sources of energy if we want to make sure jobs stay here.

You know how else you make sure that jobs stay home—is you have a health care policy that's reasonable and the prices are—and we do something about the high cost of health care for employees and employers. There's three things, the practical things we can do: one, associated health care plans to allow small businesses to pool risk in order to be able to have affordable health care for their employees; health savings accounts, which will help employees and employers better afford health care; and national medical liability reform to stop the junk lawsuits which are running up the cost of health care for these businesses.

One other thing we need to make sure of, we need to make sure we don't become isolated from the world. It's what I call economic isolationism. It's beginning to creep into the dialog. People are saying, "Well, we'll stop jobs from going overseas by making sure we put up walls and barriers between the United States and the rest of the world." That's lousy policy. You're about to hear a businessowner that relies upon exports. People work for him because he's able to export. One in five factory jobs in America exist because they're selling products somewhere else. Six million people in this country work as a result of somebody saying, "This workforce of ours is so good, I'm going to build a plant"—like Honda right outside of Cleveland, Ohio, for example. Consumer prices will go up if we wall ourselves from the rest of the world. Economic isolationism is bad economic policy, and it will cost people jobs. It will make it harder for you to keep your work.

So what I want to do is, I want to take a different tack. You see, our markets are pretty open for other people. And what we're going to do is tell other people, "If our markets are open for you, you open yours for us." You see, we want to have trade, but trade that is fair. Level—we want a level playing field. We can outcompete with anybody. See, pessimistic people say, "America can't compete." An optimistic person says, "We can compete with anybody, just let's make sure the rules are fair and the playing field is level."

No, this plan of ours is a plan that says we're not going to have outsourcing because we want to make sure we've got better jobs right here at home—better, high-paying,

high-quality jobs. And the way to do that is have an optimistic, progrowth economic policy. And that's what I intend to put forth to the United States Congress.

You ready to go? I've been talking too much. And if there appears to be a lot of hot air in here, it's probably because of me. [*Laughter*]

Robert Silverstein is with us today. Let me just say, Robert does not make a living by talking too much, like I do. Robert is an entrepreneur. He's got a very interesting little business. And Robert, do you mind telling us what you do?

[*At this point, Mr. Silverstein, president, Orelube Corp., made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes. Let me ask you, how many employees have you got?

Mr. Silverstein. We've got 13 employees right now.

The President. So first of all, we're talking to a small-business owner. You know how many businesses like Robert's are around the country? We're talking thousands and thousands and thousands of people who employ 20 people or less. It's really the backbone of the economy, when you think about it, isn't it? Small businesses, vibrant small businesses all over.

Did you hire anybody recently?

Mr. Silverstein. We just hired somebody this past November, and we just hired somebody this past February. That's two in the last 4 months, 5 months. And we plan this year to hire—a technology hire to boost the technology base of our company so we could expand our sales even further as well into these new countries that we're selling to now, as well as new countries.

The President. So he's gone from, like, 12 to 15. I heard the other day somebody kind of belittling that, that—oh, they were talking about a small business that only increased their employees by two or three people. You see, a country is vibrant when you've got small businesses who are optimistic and excited and are willing to take on additional employees. It's not the three—just three employees of Robert. There are thousands of Roberts who are hiring people. Most new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. And good Government policy, good tax policy rewards entrepreneurs like Robert.

So, Robert, I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank you for employing people. I want to tell you something: If we fall prey to economic isolationism, the jobs that he now has in his company are going to be vulnerable. If he can't export, if there's trade wars, if people throw up barriers, his people won't be working. We need to be confident in this country. We need to say, "If you're going to accept—if we're going to accept your product, you make sure you accept ours." We can compete with anybody. Robert's showing you he can do that.

And I want to thank you for being a good business leader, Robert, and thanks for coming.

All right, Vince. I met your dad. Yes, I've got a good one too—and mother, by the way. Are you still telling him what to do? Yes. Bar is still telling me what to do too. [*Laughter*]

Listen, so Vince started his own business. By the way, Robert's grandfather started his. It's pretty neat, isn't it, to be talking to the grandson of an entrepreneur who had enough faith to leave it to the dad, and the dad passed it on to Robert.

One of the problems we have, in order for families to leave businesses, is the death tax. The death tax is a bad tax. The death tax means we're going to tax a person's assets twice, once when they're living and the second time after they're not. And it is a bad tax. It makes it hard for entrepreneurs to build up their companies and leave their assets to whom they want to leave them to. The Congress started passing that—getting rid of the death tax, and we just got—one of the reasons why we need to make the tax cuts permanent is so the death tax is gone, so dreamers can leave their assets to whomever they want.

Mr. Trapani. Fine by me.

The President. Yes, I'm ready. Tell us about how you started. I mean, here you are, a good-looking guy, wondering what you're going to do with yourself.

[*Mr. Trapani, president, U.S.A. Industries, Inc., made brief remarks.*]

The President. First of all, you're getting it a little backwards. Government doesn't

create wealth. All Government does is create an environment for you who has got a good idea and willing to work to succeed. That's the difference between different visions of Government.

Okay, he's a Subchapter S corporation, which means he pays tax at the individual income tax rate. And so when you hear him talking tax for the rich, here he is. He's a small-business owner. They're trying to run his taxes up as a business owner. It doesn't make any sense to be raising taxes on small businesses.

Are you hiring anybody?

Mr. Trapani. Well, let's put it this way: Last year we were fortunate enough to have 208 great employees. Now we're fortunate enough to have 221 employees. We're looking at the possibility—and we're out here discussing things with our real estate agent—about the possibility of another 30,000 square feet of manufacturing potential, which would possibly create another 20 to 25 new jobs and, pray to God, more.

The President. See, he's hiring people. Why do we want to take money out of his pocket when he's hiring people? We don't.

Now, let me tell you another thing. Part of the Tax Code said that if you make an investment, you get a tax incentive to make the investment. In other words, we accelerated depreciation. That's a long word for saying we're trying to encourage the Vinces of the world to go out and buy some equipment. That was part of the tax plan. Some businesses need additional equipment—additional computers, additional software, and there was an incentive to go out and purchase them.

Did you buy any equipment?

Mr. Trapani. Oh, yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. Could you share with us what it was? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Trapani. It would be my pleasure. We spent a lot of our money basically in technology. It's technology, where we've spent our money in machinery and things like that—enable us to compete. We compete against——

The President. What kind of machine?

Mr. Trapani. We went out and we bought some heavy-duty air conditioning compressors, things like—not air conditioning—air compressors. And the reality of our air compressors, they're enabling us basically to do things more efficient. So besides the fact that the benefit of what the proposal in the tax plan was, we were able to save money on our utility costs. Now we're even more energy efficient.

The President. See, there's a lot of talk about productivity increases. It means his workers are more productive. They can make more products in the same amount of time as before. That means they're more productive. And the reason they're more productive is because he bought some equipment. And one of the reasons why he bought some more equipment is because the Tax Code encouraged him to do so. Congress will take that away unless they make the tax cuts permanent, by the way.

Let me tell you something else that's interesting, so that everybody understands. When he goes out and buys an air compressor, somebody has to make the air compressor. And when somebody makes the air compressor, it means somebody is more likely to find a job. The economy works when you stimulate small-business owners and consumers. It works as the result of people meeting demand. And that's what we tried to do. We tried to create more demand. We wanted Vince to say, "I need a new compressor," and encourage him to buy it, and he did. His workers are more productive, he's more competitive, and somebody had to make the compressor. And that's the way the U.S. economy works with good Government policy.

The problem is, is that when you're raising people's taxes and you're increasing their regulations and you're walling off America, you make it more difficult for Vince to be aggressive in creating more jobs. And that's why I'm glad you invited me here. Keep hiring people.

Mr. Trapani. We intend to keep hiring people. But you have also created the environment. We have interest rates that enable us to go out and borrow, that—my parents don't remember how successful this here situation has become. So with the situation and the opportunities of lower interest rates, and more than anything, the tax savings—the tax savings that come back to people, that come

back to America. My accountants are in the audience. They're happy.

The President. Yes, good. I'm glad they're happy. Wait until you get their bill. [*Laughter*] Then you won't be happy.

Okay. Pedro Ramos. *Como esta, Pedro?*

Mr. Ramos. *Bien.*

The President. Pedro works here. He's—how many children you got? *Cuantos ninos?*

Mr. Ramos. I've got two children. I've got a wife. I've got a house. I own a house. I've been working for him almost 14 years. I've been doing—he's been doing great for me. He's the best boss that I could have in this country. I think that I live in a very good country. We have such good opportunities in this country. I want to focus to get a better future for my children. My refund taxes, I always use it in my house, to fix my house. I invest all the money, my refund, in my house.

The President. Pedro, where were you born?

Mr. Ramos. I born in El Salvador.

The President. El Salvador. Got a great President, by the way. Paco Flores is one of my good friends.

Mr. Ramos. He said that you're good friends.

The President. Yes, he's a good fellow. [*Laughter*] You worked here *catorce anos?*

Mr. Ramos. Yes.

The President. Fourteen years he's worked here?

Mr. Ramos. Fourteen years, yes.

The President. How old are your children?

Mr. Ramos. The older one is 9.

The President. *Donde?* Oh, there.

Mr. Ramos. They're sitting right there. My wife is right there, also.

The President. Oh, thanks.

Mr. Ramos. The second one is 6 years old.

The President. Six years old.

Mr. Ramos. Yes. I'm so proud of my children and my wife and my boys.

The President. I want you to listen to what he said. He said, "I took the tax relief and worked on my house." There's two things I want to share with you on that. One, there's nothing better than a society which encourages people to own something, isn't there? Either to own your own business—how about the fact that this is a fellow who was born in El Salvador, comes here to our country, and now owns his own home. Isn't that one of the spectacular aspects?

The tax relief we passed—his family saved $1,900 in taxes. Now, that doesn't sound like a lot to people in Washington, probably. I know it sounds a lot to the Congressmen who are here. But that's a lot to Pedro. Think about that $1,900, what that can mean. That's, by the way, because of the child credit and the marriage penalty and reducing the 10-percent tax bracket. His family has 1,900 more dollars of their own to spend.

And so he made a decision. He said, "I'm going to fix up my house." Well, you can't fix it up out of air. He's got to go buy things to fix it up with. I bet you bought some paint.

Mr. Ramos. That's correct, yes.

The President. Paint?

Mr. Ramos. Yes, paint.

The President. So somebody had to make the paint.

Mr. Ramos. And this year I plan to use my refund to do my fence. I want to do all my—the outside of my house.

The President. So that's good. That's how the economy works. Pedro takes the extra money in his pocket, and he goes—Home Depot? Where did you go?

Mr. Ramos. I go to Home Depot. Right, yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. See? Now you do. [*Laughter*] So he goes to Home Depot, and he buys something. Somebody had to make the product. The economy works when people demand things, and we increased demand. Let me tell you the problem: Congress needs to make the child credit and the marriage and the 10-percent bracket reductions permanent. Right now these are the parts of the Tax Code that begin to expire. They need to make all taxes permanent, and they need to start with these three. Otherwise, this good fellow pays $913 more in taxes next year. If they don't make the tax cuts permanent, it's a tax increase on Pedro. He pays more taxes. It makes no sense to be taxing this good family, right now, more money. It makes no sense. Congress needs to make the child credit and the marriage penalty and the 10-percent bracket, as a beginning, make them

permanent this year, so Pedro has got more money to spend.

Good job. Good job.

Okay, Maureen White is with us. This is a really interesting story here that we're about to hear. It is a—it is innovative and compassionate. Maureen is senior vice president-chief nurse—chief nurse executive—even better—[*laughter*]—of the North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System. She is here with Maria Rais. What? Yes, exactly—Maira Rais. [*Laughter*] As I was saying, Maira Rais, yes. But why don't you tell us about your program, about your vision, and maybe introduce Maira? Thanks.

[*Ms. White made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, you're doing great. Thank you. Very good job. Unbelievably articulate.

Yes, Maureen was—first of all, is really well-spoken. [*Laughter*] I could take a lesson or two from you. [*Laughter*]

A couple of points that I think are important: One, there are jobs. There are jobs that need workers. They need nurses. Oftentimes people don't have the skills necessary to be a nurse. This hospital, an incredibly responsible group of people, said, "We'll train. We'll help. We'll pay for the training." And then the Nassau Community College stepped up and provided the curriculum, provided the trainers.

We've got an issue in front of Congress, by the way, that will boost job training through the community college system. You hear people talking about—worrying about outsourcing and jobs moving overseas, and one reason why is because they don't have the skills necessary to take the jobs of the 21st century. We have an obligation in society to help train the people for the jobs which exist. And so job training has got to focus in smart, practical ways.

Maureen talked about a really practical job training program. I want to thank the Nassau Community College people, if any are here, for being flexible and available to work with the hospital system to help people train to become nurses, to help them become skilled in the jobs which actually exist.

I'll tell you one quick story, and then we're going to go to Maira. I was out in Arizona at a community college, and a woman who worked for a graphic artist—as a graphic design artist for 15 years, I believe it was, 12 or 15 years—a lot—and she went back to Mesa Community College and took a program to give her some additional skills in technology. And she stayed there for 6 months—got paid by, by the way, worker displacement money that Congress has provided as the result of trade policies. If somebody loses a job because of trade, you can get money necessary to learn the skills for a new job. And she made more money in her first year of her new job, having gone to get new skills and to be more productive, than she did after 15 years of being a graphic artist. So not only does getting new skills help you find a job, it helps you find a higher paying job.

And that's why, Maureen, I want to thank you for sharing your story. I want you to tell your hospital people thanks. I know my friend Fred Wilpon is on the board. I wish him all the best for the Mets this year—[*laughter*]—but tell him, as importantly, he's done a good job in the hospital.

Maira, tell us about your story.

[*Ms. Rais, nurse assistant, North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System, made brief remarks.*]

The President. You know something, the story you just heard from Maira is—it's a hard story. There's a lot of people that say, "Well, I can't possibly go back to school and learn skills for the new jobs." But this economy of ours is in transition. There's fantastic opportunities. In some cases, however, people are going to need to go learn new skills in order to take advantage of the situation.

And it's hard, I fully understand, if you're a mom and you're kind of wondering whether or not it makes sense. But I want anybody out there listening to listen to Maira's story, that you can improve yourself, that you can go back to school, and it can make a huge difference in your life. I would—am I putting words in your mouth to say it's making a big difference in your life?

Ms. Rais. No, no, no, it's the truth. And I'm hoping when I graduate, work for North Shore, and I know my salary is going to be

twice as much. So I'm looking forward for that. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, she's got the chance to have three times her current salary as a result of having gone to school, paid for by her potential employer. And it's an amazing opportunity. And the reason why I'm so thrilled you all are here is that there are opportunities like that all over New York and the country. There's fantastic opportunities to gain new skills and become more productive, to take advantage of the new jobs of the 21st century.

It's unsettling when the economy changes. I fully recognize that. But in the midst of a changing economy, there are fantastic opportunities. And here is a great story of Maira Rais, newly arrived to America—well, not newly arrived, been here since 1980—but nevertheless is seizing the moment, is taking—taking advantage of the opportunity. And her salary is going to go up three times—and this good lady is going to have a better employee as a result of the training.

By the way, their family saved $1,200 in tax relief. So when Congress starts thinking about whether or not to let those taxes go back up on the people, think about Maira. I'm not worried about the two Congressmen over here, by the way. [*Laughter*] They're solid. But I want people to think about Maira. That $1,200 means a lot to Maira and her family. I know it doesn't sound like a lot in Washington, DC, terms, but it's a lot to her.

Ms. Rais. I can tell you what I did with those $1,200.

The President. Well, why don't you tell us then.

Ms. Rais. I really—because I have my son who is in college. He's graduating this May.

The President. You don't look old enough to have a son in college.

Ms. Rais. Yes.

The President. He's graduating in May? Fantastic.

Ms. Rais. Yes, but he's going to transfer—he's looking forward to transfer to another college to complete his degree in business administration.

The President. Fantastic.

Ms. Rais. My daughter—two excellent students, honor students, so I'm proud of them and my whole family.

The President. And so you're going to use the money to help your son?

Ms. Rais. Well, I really did, because when I got the tax refund money, I used it for his books, my books that I had to pay for. It helped a great deal.

The President. Now, see, the tax relief helped her go back to school so she can make three times the amount of money, possibly, than she was making. The tax relief helps average Americans. Congress needs to make the tax relief permanent; otherwise, she's going to be paying more taxes. It makes no sense to raise the taxes on Maira or Pedro or any of the entrepreneurs up here. We're doing good things with the—the people are doing good things with their own money. They're making this economy grow.

Listen, I want to thank them for coming, and I want to thank you all for coming. I hope you get a—share the same sense of optimism I do about the future of our country. When you hear about the entrepreneurial stories, you've got to be optimistic. These guys are hiring people. They believe the future is going to be better. When you hear the story of compassion coming out of the local hospital, it's got to make you optimistic about the decency of the people of this country. And then when you hear about the stories of these hard-working citizens of our country who have got big dreams for their families, and willing to achieve those big dreams, it's got to make you optimistic. I really am.

Listen, the strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. I want to thank the citizens up here today for sharing your hearts and for sharing your souls. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:32 p.m. at U.S.A. Industries, Inc. In his remarks, he referred to Libby Pataki, wife of Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; President Francisco Flores Perez of El Salvador; and Fred Wilpon, owner, New York Mets.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in East Meadow, New York

March 11, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great——

Audience member. New York loves you!

The President. Thank you, sir.

Audience member. We need you!

The President. Let me get started. [*Laughter*] Thanks for coming. Thanks for your friendship. Thanks for your support. It is great to be back in New York. We have had a fantastic day here today. And it's topped off by what is a successful effort to make sure that my campaign is properly fueled—[*laughter*]—for the charge ahead.

We're going to compete here in New York, and we're going to compete here hard. I'm counting on you. I'm counting on you to help us. The Vice President and I look forward to bringing our message to this great State. New York is going to be a part of what is going to be a great national victory in November of this year. Speaking about our Vice President, I made a really good pick when I asked Dick Cheney to join me. He's the finest Vice President our country has ever had.

Audience member. Your dad was! [*Laughter*]

The President. You know something, you sounded exactly like my mother. [*Laughter*]

Speaking about marrying well—[*laughter*]—that is precisely what I did. Laura is a fabulous First Lady. She's really a comforting soul who loves our family and loves our country. I'm really proud of the job she's done.

I'm also proud of the job that Governor George Pataki has done for the State of New York. He is a great Governor. I'm proud to call Pataki friend. I really am. It's comforting to know that he's out there on the stump defending his buddy George W. And he does a good job of it. He really does. I'm proud—thank you, George, for being here. I also want to thank my friend Rudy Giuliani for being here as well. He too is out there defending his buddy. And both these men have got a lot of credibility because they've done such a great job in their—one as Governor and one as mayor during difficult times. And I'm proud to call them friends.

I'm also pleased that Peter King traveled with me today from Washington, DC, to his district here in New York. I want to thank Peter for his service. He's a fine United States Congressman, as is Vito Fossella. Vito is a New York Congressman as well.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank Sandy Treadwell and Mike Long. I want to thank Joe Mondello. Pat Acampora is with us today. These are all people who are willing to spend time energizing the grassroots. Those are the people who are willing to put up the signs and make the phone calls and turn out the vote. I'm counting on you. You can't run a campaign alone. You need people from all neighborhoods around this country willing to work. And for those of you who are going to work on our behalf, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. We're counting on you. We're not going to let you down. And I'm looking forward to the contest.

I finally got an opponent. [*Laughter*] It was my honor to call Senator Kerry and to welcome him to the race and to congratulate him on running a good campaign. I look forward to the debate, a debate on the issues. And it's going to be an interesting debate because he's built up quite a record. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry—he's been in Washington long enough to take both sides of every issue. [*Laughter*] Senator Kerry voted for the PATRIOT Act, voted for NAFTA, voted for the No Child Left Behind Act, and for the use of force in Iraq. Now he opposes the PATRIOT Act, NAFTA, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the liberation of Iraq. He clearly has strong beliefs. [*Laughter*] They just don't last very long. [*Laughter*]

There will be a very clear choice in this election, the choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving the economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people, a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. I look forward to laying these alternatives squarely before the people.

I'm glad the campaign has begun. I have something I want to tell the people. The first

thing I'm going to tell them is we've achieved great things during the last 3 years. We've accomplished a lot. But most importantly, we have a positive vision, an optimistic vision for the years ahead, a plan to win the war on terror, a plan to extend freedom and peace throughout the world, a plan to make sure prosperity continues, and a plan to encourage compassion at home. There's no doubt where we stand. I will speak clearly and confidently about our positions, and there's no doubt we'll win 4 more years on the 2nd of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we've given serious answers. We came to office with the stock market in decline and the economy headed into recession—delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it very clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief on a quiet September morning. But we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from the justice of the United States.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people, and once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When we came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to what they call gridlock. Old problems were used to score points. Old problems were just politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. But we came to Washington for a different reason. We came to solve problems. That's why we passed major reforms to raise the standards in every public school in America. That's why we passed reforms of Medicare to give patients prescription drugs and give seniors choices. No, we came to lead, and we have delivered results for the American people.

It's a President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up to make tough decisions and keep commitments. And that's how I'm going to continue to lead this country. Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course in the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake.

My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is a lot of bitterness and anger. But he's going to find out what I know: Anger is not an agenda for the future of America.

I'm going to talk about the big issues confronting our country with a sense of optimism because I believe so much in what our country stands for, a sense of resolve and determination. My administration stands ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years. We have a reason. We can see clearly where we need to go.

The big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. It's the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was the President. We have left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping to create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have. Because we acted, our economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high, and business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation rates are low. Homeownership is at the highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added 355,000 new jobs over the past 6 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

We have a difference of opinion on taxes. My opponent's plan for those tax cuts is to take them away. He would use that money

to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea: To keep this economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We need to do more to keep our economy growing. To create jobs, we need to maintain fiscal discipline in the Nation's Capital. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from the frivolous and junk lawsuits that make it hard to expand their businesses. We need to stop overregulation at the State and Federal level. We need to control the costs of health care by association health plans or health saving accounts, and this country must have national medical liability reform. We need to open up markets for New York's farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation that will encourage conservation, that will enable us to modernize our electricity system, and that will make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

We've got a difference on how to create jobs. My opponent talks about job creation, but he's against every one of those job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolationism won't get anybody hired. The best way to create jobs is through a pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda.

Our economy is changing. It's a time of transition. And so we must help people get the skills necessary so they can find good work. All skills start with education. That's why I was so strong on the No Child Left Behind Act. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. In return for Federal money, we now expect every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract. And we want every school district in America to show us whether or not every child is learning to read and write and add and subtract, to make sure that not one single child gets left behind in our country.

We're doing more. We have special programs for high school students to make sure they can catch up in reading and math. We've got to focus on our community college system. Today I heard the great story about Nassau Community College and their nursing program, as they're paying for people to become nurses in our society. Education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and this administration is making sure the gate is open to all Americans.

We're also working toward making sure this society encourages ownership. We want more people owning a home. We want more people owning their own small business. We want people owning and managing their own health care accounts. We want younger workers to own and manage personal savings accounts under Social Security. I believe in private property so much, I want everybody to have some. [*Laughter*]

On issue after issue, the American people have a very clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts. He's against putting patients in charge of Medicare. He's against the tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority, more choices, and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give you the orders, and you'll pay the bills. I've got news for the Washington crowd, the Washington insiders. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we are not going back.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in the world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. That is not going to happen on my watch.

This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and today, no one doubts the word of the United States. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and for the good of the world and for the good of the suffering people in Afghanistan, the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator now sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence,

and we saw a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So I had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend America.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Perhaps he was hoping Saddam would lose the next election in Iraq. [*Laughter*]

We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. See, they know that a free Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake our will, to shake the will of America. You know, they really don't understand our country. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help Iraq build a free society. A free Iraq makes America and the world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries don't object. I'm all for united action, and so are our 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. This country must never outsource America's security decisions to leaders of other nations.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. Just days ago, my opponent indicated that he's not comfortable using the word "war" to describe the struggle we're in. He said, "I don't want to use that terminology." Senator Kerry has also said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Nation followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan. They were still plotting in other nations. They were drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers.

With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America. And war is what they got. One very important issue of this war is intelligence gathering, as Senator Kerry says. Yet in 1995, 2 years after the first attack on the World Trade Center, my opponent offered legislation to cut the overall intelligence budget by $1½ billion. When he introduced that bill on the floor of the Senate, Senator Kerry said he was cutting spending that was, in his words, pointless, wasteful, antiquated, and just plain silly. Well, his colleagues must have had their own ideas about what was pointless and silly, because not one of them signed on as a cosponsor to Senator Kerry's idea. Intelligence spending is necessary, not wasteful. It is important. It is a serious duty of our Government and vital to the defense of this country.

Our intelligence professionals are taking great risks, and they're doing great work. And so are the men and women of the United States military. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege—the high privilege—of meeting with those who

defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in very good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion and reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of the Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and help. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented on or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for the culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that says, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of our leaders. This isn't one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, a period of time when American resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I stood with George and Rudy. I'll never forget that day. There were workers in hardhats shouting at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember a fellow pointed at me and said, "Mr. President, never let me down." As we all did that day, the men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I have also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, whether we could meet a serious challenge or whether we had the capacity to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead in the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:25 p.m. at the Carltun. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; Rudolph W. Giuliani, former mayor of New York City; Alexander F. "Sandy" Treadwell, chairman, New York

Republican State Committee; Mike Long, chairman, Conservative Party of New York State; Joseph Mondello, chairman, Nassau County Republican Party; and Patricia L. Acampora, New York State assemblywoman.

Remarks Following a Wreath-Laying Ceremony for Victims of the March 11 Madrid Terrorist Attack

March 12, 2004

Mr. Ambassador, thank you for having Laura and me here during this solemn occasion. The United States of America sends our prayers and sympathies to the Spanish people, who mourn the loss of life, who today weep for their loved ones, who wonder about their future now that there's been such tragedy.

The bombings in Spain are a grim reminder that there are evil people in the world who are willing to kill innocent life. I appreciate so very much your Government's strong stand against terrorism and terrorist organizations like ETA. The United States of America stands firmly with you as we work to make the world more peaceful and more free.

Killers try to shake our will. They try to shake our confidence in the future. Spanish people will stand firm against this type of killing, and they'll have a friend with the American people. So Mr. Ambassador, we ask for God's blessings for the people of your great country.

Thank you very much for having Laura and me here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:08 p.m. at the Embassy of Spain. In his remarks, he referred to Francisco Javier Ruperez Rubio, Spain's Ambassador to the U.S.; and Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA).

Interview of the President and the First Lady by Television of Spain (TVE)

March 12, 2004

Reaction to March 11 Terrorist Attack in Madrid

Q. First of all, I would like to thank you very much on behalf of the Spanish people for being able to send a message. And I'd like to ask your feelings about this horrifying thing that happened yesterday in Madrid. First question: What are your feelings?

The President. Well, I can remember when our citizens lost life. I remember the horror, the outrage, the anger, and the incredible sadness. So I guess my—I feel the same way today. My first reaction is, my heart breaks for those who are mourning the loss of their loved one. It must be a sense of emptiness and a sense of real—their hearts are broken. And we send our prayers to those who are so sad——

The First Lady. Grieving, who are grieving today. We all are thinking about them. And I want all the people who lost somebody yesterday in Spain to know that the American people are sending our love and our condolences. And we know what it feels like, and we know how tough it is.

Q. That would be the second question. The message for the people of Spain is that of solidarity and love?

The President. Of course. I think the people of Spain are going to rally around those who have lost life. It's amazing what happens when something like this happens to a society. There's an outpouring of love and concern. There's an outpouring of love here in America from people that the families in Spain will never know. There's just a lot of people who care deeply about the fact of the lost life. Neighbors will help neighbors.

I think you're going to find as well that the people of Spain—or we'll find as well—the people of Spain will refuse to be intimidated, that they're not going to allow killers, coldblooded killers, to intimidate the country. And these people kill because they hate freedom and they hate what Spain stands for. Spain is a great culture and a great people, with great traditions of democracy. And the killers hate freedom, and they're trying to intimidate. And the Spanish people will not be intimidated.

Q. As you know, the royal family is working hard, as is the Spanish Government, trying to heal, if it's possible. Any message for the many women, many families who now feel really lost?

The First Lady. I want to encourage women and men, and mothers and fathers

particularly, to put their arms around their children. These are very frightening times for adults, so we can imagine how frightening they are for children. And it's a time for adults, mothers and dads and grandparents, to protect their children and reassure their children, put their arms around them and let them know they're going to be okay and the country is going to be okay and things will work out, as we grieve for these people who lost the person they love best in the bombings.

Cooperation With Spanish Government

Q. Mr. President, you've been dealing with this situation for 4 years. I'm sure it's been very hard. What could you say to the Spanish Government now dealing with a hard thing?

The President. My first reaction is that the people of Spain are lucky to have Jose Maria Aznar as the President during these times. He is a man who understands the war on terror, clearly knows the stakes, and knows that we must never give an inch to the terrorists. He will be able to be a strong voice, a compassionate voice and a strong voice during these times.

The Government must stay strong. But the Spanish Government has been fighting terrorist organizations for a while. Jose Maria has been strong against terrorist organizations like ETA. He knows what the stakes are. We don't know who did this yet. I wouldn't rule anybody out. You'll hear all kinds of rumors, and it will take a while to find out the facts. And the United States Government will help the Spanish Government find out the facts, if they so desire.

People will find there's going to be a lot of speculation here, and that's all it's going to be. People will claim credit or not claim credit. People will say, "We didn't do it," or "We did do it," to create a sense of confusion. But the facts will become known after a while. It takes a while. It took us a while to find out exactly who ordered the attacks on America. And once the facts are known and once we find out who did it, America will join the Spanish Government to hunt the terrorists down and bring them to justice.

Q. Would it make any difference if it's ETA or Al Qaida or any radical——

The President. Well, it's hard to speculate. We've seen claims already—"No, we didn't do this." Sometimes when somebody says, "No, we didn't do it," it means they did do it. And sometimes these people want to deceive. But we don't know yet. And all I can assure the people of Spain is that, to the extent that the Government wants, we will help find out the facts, and if these terrorists are overseas or plotting from overseas or anywhere in Europe, we will lend our expertise, our intelligence gathering to help the Spanish authorities bring these people to justice. That's what the Spanish people expect. These people need to be brought to justice. And we will help any way we can.

Responsibility for Attack/Spanish Election

Q. Let's talk a bit about the future. As you know, we have elections in a couple of days, the day after tomorrow. And some people say that if it's Al Qaida, that could mean that somebody is trying to punish the Spanish Government for backing the war. What do you think about it?

The President. I think that's a feeble excuse. Killers kill. And I think we shouldn't give them any great credit. All they're trying to do is shake the will of the free world. They hate freedom, and they're willing to try to create—intimidate people to change. And the Spanish Government will never change its love for freedom. It's one of the great things about Spain, is its embrace of liberty.

But people shouldn't speculate right now as to who did it. It's going to take a while. It just is. These were very coordinated bombings, and it's going to take some good forensic work to get the facts.

And so I hope the people of Spain just go about their business—and participate in the elections, of course; after all, Spain is a democracy—and not let the speculation decide how to vote. They ought to vote for who they think is going to be the best government.

Q. But it's almost inevitable. I mean, the whole world is watching who is behind the attacks——

The President. Sure. We want to help—we want to find—we want to help find out. But I don't think you can know immediately.

Again, people will—this happened in our country. And there was all kinds of speculation as to who attacked, who started the attacks. And it took a while to make sure we knew. But over time, our intelligence services got worked up and law enforcement got involved, and I think you'll find the case to be in Spain as well. The facts will become known. And then that makes it easier for the Government to make the decision as to how to proceed.

Q. Thank you very much. As I said, on behalf of the Spanish people, thank you for sending a message and for being close to us.

The President. Yes. Well, we care deeply about our friends, and the people of Spain are friends. May God bless them.

Q. Thank you.

The First Lady. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 1:25 p.m. at the Embassy of Spain. In his remarks, the President referred to Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on Efforts To Globally Promote Women's Human Rights

March 12, 2004

Thank you all very much. It takes me 45 seconds to walk to work, and sometimes I get introduced by my wife. [*Laughter*] It's a heck of a job. Thanks, Laura.

Laura is—you know, one of the interesting moments in our family came when she gave a radio address. She used the President's time to give a radio address, to speak to the women of Afghanistan. And it made a big difference in people's lives. And it was from that moment forward that she, personally, has dedicated time to make sure that people who have been enslaved are free, particularly women. And I'm proud of Laura's leadership.

In the last 2½ years, we have seen remarkable and hopeful development in world history. Just think about it: More than 50 million men, women, and children have been liberated from two of the most brutal tyrannies on Earth—50 million people are free. All these people are now learning the blessings of freedom.

And for 25 million women and girls, liberation has a special significance. Some of these girls are attending school for the first time. It's hard for people in America to imagine. A lot of young girls now get to go to school. Some of the women are preparing to vote in free elections for the very first time.

The public whippings by Taliban officials have ended. The systematic use of rape by Saddam's regime to dishonor families has ended. He sits in the prison cell.

The advance of freedom in the greater Middle East has given new rights and new hopes to women. And America will do its part to continue the spread of liberty.

I want to thank a man who is working hard to continue the spread of liberty, and that's the Secretary of State, Colin Powell. I appreciate three members of my Cabinet who are here: Secretary Gale Norton, Secretary Ann Veneman, and Secretary Elaine Chao. I put together, in all due humility, the greatest Cabinet ever. And one of the reasons why is these three ladies have agreed to serve. The President has got to get pretty good advice—I mean really good advice, frankly, from people other than his wife. [*Laughter*] I get great foreign policy advice from Condoleezza Rice, who is with us today.

I want to thank other members of my administration who are here for this very important occasion to end what has been a very important dialog. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz is with us; Andrew Natsios, who runs USAID. Paula Dobriansky of the Department of State—and I want to thank you for going to Afghanistan recently with Joyce Rumsfeld, Secretary Rumsfeld's better half, who also went to Afghanistan recently to spread the word that America will stay the course, that when we say something, we mean it, and that we say we're going to—[*applause*].

I just named a distinguished American to be a U.S. delegate to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, my sister, Dorothy. Thank you for being here, Doro. And I took the recommendation of Vice President Cheney for another member of the same delegation. He suggested that America would be well served by his eldest daughter, Liz. And he's right. Good to see you, Liz.

I want to thank Rend al-Rahim, who is with us today. Rend, thank you for coming. She's the senior Iraqi representative to the United States. That is a forerunner to ambassadorial status, I guess. Certainly I'm not speaking for what is going to be the sovereign Government of Iraq. She's good at what she does, I'm telling you.

There's a lot of ambassadors who are here. I want to thank you all for coming. It's good to see you. I appreciate you taking time to be here. This is an important conference. The message of the United States about freedom and liberty in the Middle East is a serious message. And I thank the Governments for being here to listen and to help us advance this vital cause for what's good for the world. And so thanks for coming. There's a lot of countries represented here, particularly Middle Eastern countries.

As I told you, Joyce went to—and Paula went to Afghanistan. There are other members of the U.S. Afghan Women's Council that went to Kabul. I want to thank you all for going. I hear it's—one of the travelers, Karen Hughes, reported back, and Margaret did as well—Margaret Spellings, who is my Domestic Policy Advisor. They said it's unbelievable what's taking place there. The country is transitioning from despair to hope. And it's easy to see now. It's changing and changing for the better. The people of Afghanistan have just got to know that we'll stand with them for however long it takes to be free.

I appreciate the Iraqi women who attended the Commission on the Status of Women in New York this week. I want to thank you all for coming. I appreciate you being here.

I want to thank my friend Dr. Raja Khuzai, who's with us today. This is the third time we have met. The first time we met, she walked into the Oval Office—let's see, was it the first time? It was the first time. The door opened up. She said, "My liberator," and burst out in tears. And so did I.

Dr. Khuzai also was there to have Thanksgiving dinner with our troops. And it turned out to be me as well. Of course, I didn't tell her I was coming. [*Laughter*] But I appreciate that, and now she's here again. I want to thank you, Doctor, for your hard work on the writing of the basic law for your people. You have stood fast. You have stood strong. Like me, you've got liberty etched in your heart, and you're not going to yield. And you are doing a great job, and we're proud to have you back. Thanks for coming.

Ambassador Ssempala is with us as well, from Uganda. It's great to see you again, Ambassador. Thanks. She made our trip to Uganda so special that time. She paved the way for what was a special trip. I'm going to talk a little bit about HIV/AIDS. I want to thank you and your country's leadership on that important issue.

Shamim Jawad is with us, Ambassador Said Jawad's better half. I want to thank you very much for being here, Shamim. Thanks for coming. I appreciate your coming.

The Director of the Anti-Trafficking Operations for International Justice Mission is Sharon Cohn. She's with us. Let me tell what that means. That means she's working to end sex slavery. She is a noble soul who cares deeply about the plight of every woman. And I'm honored that you're up here, Sharon. I want thank you very much for your strong commitment. This Government stands with you, and our country stands with you. We abhor—we abhor—the practice of sex slavery. We will do all we can to help you.

Support for human rights is the cornerstone of American foreign policy. As a matter of national conviction, we believe that every person in every culture is meant by God to live in freedom. As a matter of national interest, we know that the spread of liberty and hope is essential to the defeat of despair and bitterness and terror. The policy of the American Government is to stand for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity—the rule of law, the limits on the power of the state, free speech, freedom of worship, equal justice, respect for women, religious and ethnic tolerance, and protections for private property. That is what we believe, and we're not going to change.

We have transformed this belief in human rights into action. Last year, our Government devoted nearly $75 million to combat the worldwide trafficking in human beings. It's a brutal trade, inhumane trade, by sick people that targets many women and girls. I spoke out against this practice at the United Nations. I called upon the world to join us.

This country is determined to fight and end this modern form of slavery.

HIV/AIDS has orphaned millions of children worldwide. And in some African countries, nearly 60 percent of adults carrying the virus are women. In 2002, we created the Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative to prevent viral transmission of the virus between generations. It's an important initiative by this Government, but it wasn't enough.

Last year, I announced an Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a $15 billion commitment over 5 years to fight this deadly disease. This country is determined to turn the tide against this modern plague. When we see disease and suffering, we will not turn our back.

The economic empowerment of women is one effective way to improve lives and to protect rights. Each year for the past 5 years, the United States Government has provided an average of $155 million in small loans, microloans. About 70 percent of those benefit women. It turns out the world is learning what we know in America: The best entrepreneurs in the country are women. In America, most new small businesses are started by women. With the right help, that will be the case around the world as well.

We're determined to help women to find the independence and dignity that comes from ownership. These are necessary responses to urgent problems. Yet, in the end, the rights of women and all human beings can be assured only within the framework of freedom and democracy. If people aren't free, it is likely that women will be suppressed.

Human rights are defined by a constitution. They're defended by an impartial rule of law. They're secured in a pluralistic society. The advance of women's rights and the advance of liberty are ultimately inseparable. America stands with the world's oppressed peoples. We've got to speak clearly for freedom, and we will, in places like Cuba or North Korea or Zimbabwe or Burma.

We stand with courageous reformers. Aung San Suu Kyi is a courageous reformer and a remarkable woman who remains under house arrest for her efforts to bring democracy to her nation. Earlier today, the Libyan Government released Fathi Jahmi. She's a local government official who was imprisoned in 2002 for advocating free speech and democracy. It's an encouraging step toward reform in Libya. You probably have heard, Libya is beginning to change her attitude about a lot of things. We hope that more such steps will follow in Libya and around the world.

The advance of freedom cannot be held back forever. And America is working to hasten the day when freedom comes to every single nation. We understand a free world is more likely to be a peaceful world.

When Iran's Shirin Ebadi accepted the Nobel for peace—Nobel Prize for Peace last year, here's what she said: "If the 21st century wishes to free itself from the cycle of violence and acts of terror and war and avoid repetition of the experience of the 20th century, there is no other way except by understanding and putting into practice every human right for all mankind, irrespective of race and gender, faith, nationality, or social status." That's a powerful statement coming from Iran. No wonder she won the Nobel Prize. She's a proud Iranian. She is a devout Muslim. She believes that democracy is consistent with Islamic teachings. And we share in this belief. That's what we believe in America. A religion that demands individual moral accountability and encourages the encounter of the individual with God is fully compatible with the rights and responsibilities of self-government. Promotion of democracy in the greater Middle East is important. It's a priority of ours. And it will be a long and difficult road. But we're on the way.

Three years ago, the nation of Afghanistan was the primary training ground for Al Qaida. You heard Laura talk about the movie "Osama." See it. It'll help enrich the words I'm about to say: The Taliban were incredibly barbaric. It's hard for the American mind to understand "barbaric." Watch the movie. Women were forbidden from appearing in public unescorted. That's barbaric. Women were prohibited from holding jobs. It's impossible for young girls to get an education. That's barbaric. It's not right.

Today, the Taliban regime is gone, thank goodness. Girls are back in class. The amazing accomplishment, though, is that Afghanistan has a new constitution that guarantees

full participation by women. The constitution is a milestone in Afghanistan's history. It's really a milestone in world history, when you think about it. All Afghan citizens, regardless of gender, now have equal rights before the law.

The new lower house of Parliament will guarantee places for women. Women voters in Afghanistan, as Laura said, are registering at a faster rate than men for the June election. What's new? [*Laughter*] Afghanistan still has challenges ahead, no doubt about it. But now the women of that country, instead of living in silence and fear, are a part of the future of the country. They're a part of a hopeful tomorrow.

Iraq has a different history and yet a different set of challenges. Only one year ago—only one year after being liberated from an incredibly ruthless person and a ruthless regime, Iraqi women are playing an essential part in rebuilding the nation. They're part of the future of the country.

Every woman in Iraq is better off because the rape rooms and torture chambers of Saddam Hussein are forever closed. He is a barbaric person. He violated people in such a brutal way that some never thought that the spirit of Iraq could arise again. We never felt that way here in this administration. We felt that people innately love freedom and if just given a chance, if given an opportunity, they will rise to the challenge.

Three women now serve on the Iraqi Governing Council. You just heard me praise one. The historic document that was written recently guarantees the basic rights of all Iraqis, men and women, including freedoms of worship, expression, and association. The document protects unions and political parties and outlaws discrimination based on gender, ethnic class, and religion. It's an amazing document that's been written.

Iraqi women are already using their new political powers to guard against extremism and intolerance in any form, whether it be religious or secular. The women leaders of Afghanistan and Iraq have shown incredible courage. When you think about what life was like months ago for many women, the fact that they have risen up is a testament to their souls, to their very being, their bravery. Some have paid for their new freedoms with their lives, but in so doing, their sons and daughters will be forever grateful. These leaders have sent a message throughout the Middle East and throughout the world: Every man and women in every culture was born to live in freedom.

The momentum of liberty is building in the Middle East. Just think about what's taken place recently. In 2002, Bahrain elected its own parliament for the first time in nearly three decades. Liberty is marching. Oman has extended the vote to all adult citizens. On Monday, its Sultan appointed the nation's first female cabinet minister. We're making progress on the road to freedom. Qatar has a new constitution. Yemen has a multiparty political system. Kuwait has a directly elected national assembly. Jordan held historic elections last summer. Times are changing.

America is taking the side of those reformers who are committed to democratic change. It is our calling to do so. It is our duty to do so. I proposed doubling the budget for the National Endowment for Democracy to $80 million. We will focus its new work on bringing free elections and free markets and free speech and free labor unions to the Middle East.

By radio and television, we're broadcasting the message of tolerance and truth in Arabic and Persian to tens of millions of people. And our Middle East Partnership Initiative supports economic and political and educational reform throughout the region. We're building women's centers in Afghanistan and Iraq that will offer job training and provide loans for small businesses and teach women about their rights as citizens and human beings. We're active. We're strong in the pursuit of freedom. We just don't talk a good game in America, we act.

In Afghanistan, the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council is developing projects to improve the education of women and to train the leaders of tomorrow. You heard Laura talk about her deep desire to help train women to become teachers, not only in the cities but in the rural parts of Afghanistan. We'll succeed. We'll follow through on that initiative. We're pursuing a forward strategy of freedom—that's how I like to describe it, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. And I believe

there's no doubt that if America stays the course and we call upon others to stay the course, liberty will arrive and the world will be better off.

The momentum of freedom in the Middle East is beginning to benefit women. That's what's important for this conference. A free society is a society in which women will benefit.

I want to remind you of what King Mohamed of Morocco said when he proposed a series of laws to protect women and their families. It's a remarkable statement. It's like he's put the stake in the ground for women's rights. He said, "How can society achieve progress while women, who represent half the nation, see their rights violated and suffer as a result of injustice and violence and marginalization, notwithstanding the dignity and justice granted to them by our glorious religion." It's a strong statement of freedom. He's right. America stands with His Majesty and others who share that basic belief. The future of Muslim nations will be better off for all with the full participation of women.

These are extraordinary times, historic times. We've seen the fall of brutal tyrants. We're seeing the rise of democracy in the Middle East. We're seeing women take their rightful place in societies that were once incredibly oppressive and closed. We're seeing the power and appeal of liberty in every single culture. And we're proud once again—this Nation is proud—to advance the cause of human rights and human freedom.

I want to thank you all for serving the cause. The cause is just, the cause is right, and the cause is good. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:34 p.m. in the the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Karen Hughes, former Counselor to the President; Dr. Raja Habib Khuzai, member, Iraqi Governing Council; Shamim Jawad, wife of Said Tayeb Jawad, Afghanistan's Ambassador to the U.S.; Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy of Burma; and Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said and Minister of Higher Education Rawya bint Saud al-Bussaidi of Oman. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 6

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he met with President Vicente Fox of Mexico.

At noon, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a lunch for President Fox and his wife, Marta Sahagun de Fox.

March 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Dallas, TX, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Dr. Joann Sanders.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Houston, TX, where he attended the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and greeted the 2003 Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association champions.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to designate J. Bonnie Newman and Leighton Smith, Jr., as members of the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Naval Academy.

March 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Arlington, VA, and later returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, the President met with Veterans of Foreign Wars commander-in-chief Edward S. Banas, Sr. He then participated in a photo opportunity with the winners of the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Voice of Democracy Award.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tina Westby Jonas to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller).

The President announced his intention to designate Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr., as Acting

Inspector General of the Social Security Administration.

March 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Cleveland, OH, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Judi Firestone. He then toured the Thermagon, Inc., manufacturing plant.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stuart Levey to be Under Secretary of the Treasury for Enforcement in charge of overseeing the new Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence.

The President announced his intention to nominate Juan Carlos Zarate to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorist Finance.

March 11

In the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with King Juan Carlos I and President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain to express his condolences concerning the terrorist attack in Madrid earlier in the morning. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to East Farmingdale, NY, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Richard McKeon. Later, he traveled to Bay Shore, NY, where he toured U.S.A. Industries, Inc.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to East Meadow, NY, where he attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Nassau County 9/11 Memorial.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will meet with Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands at the White House on March 16.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland to the White House on March 17.

The President announced his intention to nominate Romolo A. Bernardi to be Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas Hill Moore to be a member of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Edwin D. Williamson to be Director of the Office of Government Ethics.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lewis W. Lucke to be Ambassador to Swaziland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Earle I. Mack to be Ambassador to Finland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jackson McDonald to be Ambassador to Guinea.

The President announced his intention to nominate John M. Ordway to be Ambassador to Kazakhstan.

March 12

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Ricardo Lagos of Chile to discuss the situation in Haiti. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photo opportunity with winners of the White House News Photographers Association's "Eyes of History" contest. Later, he traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph E. Brennan to be a Commissioner of the Federal Maritime Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Barbara J. Sapin to be a member of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jack Dyer Crouch II to be Ambassador to Romania.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted March 11

Romolo A. Bernardi,
of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Alphonso R. Jackson.

Tina Westby Jonas,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), vice Dov S. Zakheim, resigning.

Lewis W. Lucke,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Earle I. Mack,
of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Finland.

Jackson McDonald,
of Florida, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Guinea.

Thomas Hill Moore,
of Florida, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2002 (reappointment).

John M. Ordway,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Juan Carlos Zarate,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Kenneth Lawson, resigned.

Submitted March 12

Joseph E. Brennan,
of Maine, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for the term expiring June 30, 2008 (reappointment).

Jack Dyer Crouch II,
of Missouri, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Romania.

William H. Pryor, Jr.,
of Alabama, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit, vice Emmett Ripley Cox, retired, to which position he was appointed during the last recess of the Senate.

Mary J. Schoelen,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims for the term of 15 years, vice John J. Farley III, term expiring.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released March 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Trent Duffy

Released March 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released March 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: Opening New Markets for America's Workers

Transcript of remarks by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice at the McConnell Center for Political Leadership, March 8

Released March 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern

Released March 12

Fact sheet: International Women's Week

Acts Approved by the President

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.

Notices

Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran—376
Notice of Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With Morocco—366

Proclamations

Irish-American Heritage Month—349
Save Your Vision Week—350
Women's History Month—350

Statements by the President

International Women's Day—366
Iraq, completion of the Transitional Administrative Law—365

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—402
Checklist of White House press releases—401
Digest of other White House announcements—399
Nominations submitted to the Senate—401

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
Washington DC 20402

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for private use, $300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
GPO
PERMIT NO. G-26

**********ALL FOR STATE MI

A PD KOERN346M DEC 04 R
MARY KOERNKE
PRO QUEST I&L
PO BOX 1346
ANN ARBOR MI 48106